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New York

President: Mr. Gurirab ..... (Namibia)

The meeting was called to order at 10 a.m.

Agenda item 9 *(continued)*

General debate

Address by the Prime Minister of the Independent State of **Samoa, His Excellency the Honourable Tuilaepa Sailele Malielegaoi**

The President: The Assembly will now hear an address by the Prime Minister of the Independent State of Samoa.

Mr. Malielegaoi, Prime Minister of the Independent State of Samoa, was escorted to the rostrum.

The President: I have great pleasure in welcoming the Prime Minister of the Independent State of Samoa, His Excellency The Honorable Tuilaepa Sailele Malielegaoi, and inviting him to address the General Assembly.

Mr. Malielegaoi (Samoa): Mr. President, you assume the presidency at a historic moment and during the most challenging of times. Most warmly do we congratulate you. Samoa welcomes your leadership and pledges to you and to Namibia our fullest support.

This Assembly is an especially happy one for the Pacific: we now have in our midst three more South Pacific Forum States, the Republic of Kiribati, the Republic of Nauru and the Kingdom of Tonga. Ancient in tradition and long in the business of political independence, each represents the variety and uniqueness of our region. They make more real the goal of universality, as I know their contribution will enrich the work of the Organization. In the name of my country, I extend to the Governments of Kiribati, Nauru and Tonga the warmest of greetings.

Let me, at the outset, pay a tribute to the stewardship of our Secretary-General and acknowledge the remarkable work of the United Nations — remarkable in terms of what is being done and achieved, at times against extreme and appalling odds.

The twentieth century has been marked by violence and tragedy throughout. Millions have died in countless conflicts worldwide. Millions more continue to perish from poverty and disease.

The Secretary-General's report on the work of the Organization (A/54/1) is thoughtful and challenging. Our world is one of trouble and insecurity. The range and complexity of the issues are worrying, in some respects seemingly overwhelming. Ordinary aspirations are not being matched by effective action. Far too many are embroiled in the brutalities of war. Fundamental human needs and rights are being denied.

I believe we should all pay much more attention to the reports of the Secretary-General. There is much there to confirm, and much to test our own perception of events and trends: directly, and in my view rightly, the

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Secretary-General has drawn attention to the place of sovereignty in the context of our contemporary common interest and asks how and by what means we are to defend that common interest. These questions go to the heart of the matter; the answers to them will define the role of the United Nations in the next millennium. There will, of course, be variance in perspectives. The experience of the United Nations itself in recent times does not yield satisfactory answers.

Yet there are challenges that need to be met, seriously and urgently. I would agree with the Secretary-General that it is critical to set clear criteria for international action and intervention. It is the United Nations, with its multilateral setting, that is best placed to determine such criteria; it is the United Nations that has been invested with the global ideals to deal with interventions, but, alas, there have been failures and there has been inability.

We should now look more deeply into the causes of those failures and lack of ability and in so doing we must balance competing rights and values. The very essence of the Organization is thus brought into focus: we need to ensure that the United Nations is able to function effectively in the new century, that we have a United Nations strengthened by commitment and reform. Above all, we need to bear in mind the essential connection between peace, development and human rights. We ignore any one to the fundamental detriment of all, although peace is the ultimate measure of our common interest, indeed, of our common future.

We think it is time to move to a more definitive phase in the current efforts to reform the Security Council. The issues are clear, and have been clear for some time: points of argument are now being repeated, or repackaged. Substantive changes are required: the current structure does not reflect the facts and realities of today; suffers from imbalance and inequities. Membership of the Security Council should be enlarged: we have said before that Japan deserves to be a permanent member. Provision for this should be made.

We appreciate the procedural changes made to the working of the Council, and we would encourage more of them: it would not be desirable to seek to resolve the unfairness of representation in one category without proper attention to the other. We share the view that Security Council reforms must necessarily be comprehensive and must address all aspects as a whole, including the power of veto. The veto is a central issue which must be resolved in the context of the current reforms. We think there is a proven case for the power of veto to be curtailed, and restricted to Chapter VII matters.

Samoa fully supports the ongoing efforts to modernize and strengthen the Organization. Reform measures must provide for the serious and early review of the regional groupings. The current arrangements are more representative of the past than the present. There is a need for reconfiguration to reflect natural geographies and to ensure equitable representation of subregions.

The anomaly of Australia and New Zealand being counted outside their geographical area should be corrected. They form a natural part of the South Pacific subregion of the Asian Group. Samoa adds its voice to the call made by Fiji and Papua New Guinea during this session for such regional reconfiguration. The matter should figure in the reform of the Organization and should be taken into account in reforming the structure and membership of the Security Council.

In the coming year, as we move towards an agreed approach to the Millennium Assembly, my Government believes that the world community should focus on major global challenges likely to confront humankind in the next century. We agree with the Secretary-General that, alongside war and conflicts, natural disasters are a major and priority global challenge. Natural disasters remain a most serious threat to human lives and national economies. As we have seen in recent times, natural disasters occur widely and indiscriminately, not stopping at any border. At this moment, we think especially of communities whose lives and property have been affected in Greece, Turkey, Taiwan, the United States and the Bahamas.

The world has experienced three times as many great natural disasters in the 1990s as in the 1960s, the year 1998 being the hottest year on record and the worst for weather-related natural disasters. Yet we learn with dismay from the Secretary-General's report that emergency aid funds have declined by 40 per cent in the past five years alone. For small island States such as the Bahamas, these "once-in-a-century" events are occurring with alarming frequency and severity. They are truly calamitous in effect. Hurricane Floyd was the fourth-strongest hurricane measured this century.

My own country has not been spared. We can only be thankful that our neighbours and traditional friends come so readily to our assistance at moments of disaster. Our Pacific neighbours, Australia, Japan and New Zealand, continue to be at the forefront of emergency and

rehabilitation efforts in disasters affecting our Pacific region. Countries far from the Pacific, such as those of the European Union, have also been generous. Even developing nations have not been hesitant in coming to our help. In the major disasters that have devastated our country, the People's Republic of China in particular, despite the severe and regular natural disasters it itself suffers, has been unstinting in helping our country in those difficult times.

China last week commemorated the fiftieth anniversary of the establishment of the Republic. Samoa joins other nations in congratulating the People's Republic of China in reaching this important milestone in its history.

The immediate practical needs are to determine what preventive action might be available, especially to the small and vulnerable. Advanced early-warning systems using satellite-derived data and Internet dissemination would be essential, as would be the need to train and improve capacities. Greater efforts to establish contingency planning and other preparedness measures for disaster-prone countries are required. In all these, active cooperation at all levels — national, regional and international — would be vital. Above all, we agree that we should maximize the lessons learned from the experience of the International Decade for Natural Disaster Reduction. It is critical for all countries, especially the most vulnerable, that this work be continued.

Samoa adds its voice to the expression of outrage at the violations in East Timor. These are violations of principles and of Government responsibilities, violations against the innocent and defenceless. The real lesson of East Timor is that a people's aspirations for freedom will triumph in the end. They cannot be suppressed for ever. Indeed, their balloted choice is abundantly clear. It is also the lesson of East Timor that the United Nations is best placed to safeguard rights and freedoms while ensuring order and security.

We are relieved that the multinational force is now in position and we appreciate the ready and effective response of key States, including our South Pacific neighbours, Australia and New Zealand. Samoa is especially grateful for the clear and committed leadership taken by Australia.

The violations to which I have referred reinforce the need for the world community to move as expeditiously as possible to complete the establishment of the International Criminal Court. Those responsible for these unacceptable acts of violence and crime must be brought to account. Samoa was able to contribute to the making of the Rome Statute. We are firmly committed to the early establishment of the Court, and we will continue to play a role in the work of the Preparatory Commission. We believe very firmly that the Court will provide an essential step in the name of human rights and the rule of law. To this end we should ensure prompt and widespread ratification of the Court's Statute.

Speaking now in Samoa's role as Chairman of the Alliance of Small Island States (AOSIS) and on behalf of the forty-three members of our Alliance, allow me, Mr President, to thank you most sincerely for the time and effort you have devoted to the special session to ensure its success.

I also wish to express to all Member States, to the United Nations agencies and intergovernmental and non-governmental organizations, our very deep appreciation for their participation in the twenty-second special session in the past two days. The AOSIS countries are especially grateful for the expressions of commitment, understanding and support.

What we have heard provides additional motivation for us to make the Barbados Programme of Action one of real and sustained implementation. There are critical challenges that require attention. We are determined to turn those challenges into opportunities. With your support, we believe there is every prospect for achievement.

The President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the Prime Minister of the Independent State of Samoa for the statement he has just made.

The Hon. Tuilaepa Sailele Malielegaoi, Prime Minister of Samoa, was escorted from the rostrum.

Address by Mr. Mahathir Mohamad, Prime Minister of Malaysia

The President: The Assembly will now hear an address by the Prime Minister of Malaysia.

Mr. Mahathir Mohamad, Prime Minister of Malaysia, was escorted to the rostrum.

The President: I have great pleasure in welcoming the Prime Minister of Malaysia, His Excellency Mr. Mahathir Mohamad, and inviting him to address the General Assembly.

Mr. Mahathir (Malaysia): Mr. President, allow me first to congratulate you on your election to the presidency of the General Assembly at its fifty-fourth session. It gives me great pleasure to see the international community honour both you and your country through your election to this high office. I am confident that, given your vast experience and diplomatic skills, you will be able to steer the proceedings of the Assembly to a successful conclusion.

I join other speakers in expressing our gratitude to your predecessor, His Excellency Mr. Didier Opertti, for the dedicated and effective manner in which he had guided the work of the General Assembly at the last session.

I would also like to take this opportunity to commend the Secretary-General for his great dedication to the Organization and the many contributions he has made in the service of the international community.

Malaysia would also like to join other Member States in welcoming, most warmly, the Republics of Kiribati and Nauru and the Kingdom of Tonga as new Members of the United Nations. We look forward to working closely with them, particularly on issues of common interest to the Asia-Pacific region whence we come.

The twentieth century is coming to an end. Before we enter the twenty-first it is useful to review the events of this century so that we may learn from our experience and hopefully we will know how to conduct the affairs of the twenty-first.

This century saw the most destructive wars which destroyed billions of dollars of property and killed millions of people. It saw the most inhuman dictatorship in Germany where six million Jews were tortured and killed. It witnessed the first nuclear bombs that killed hundreds of thousands instantly and many more due to the after-effects.

When the greatest war in human history ended, this body, the United Nations, was founded. We thought there would be peace as the great Powers worked together in the United Nations. But that was not the case. Immediately the victors divided themselves into two camps and initiated the cold war. However, it was the threat of a hot war that kept the war cold. Each side built huge arsenals of nuclear and non-nuclear weapons and glared at the other across deep chasms of misunderstanding as they threateningly fingered their nuclear triggers.

For the colonies of European nations there was an up side. Fear of defections to the other side forced the two camps to relax their grips on their colonial territories. Countries gained independence, but their survival depended on their skills in playing the Western bloc against the Eastern bloc.

Unfortunately this choice to defect to the other side did not last. Suddenly the Communist side collapsed. Lured by the apparent wealth of the Western free-market liberal democracies, the Eastern bloc jettisoned their authoritarian centrally planned economies and adopted the liberal democratic free market overnight. They thought that since they would now have a system similar to that of the Western bloc they would get the friendship, cooperation and help from the Western countries.

They were naive enough to think that after 70 years of command economy and dictatorship they could overnight switch to the free market economy under the liberal democratic system. They soon found out that they knew nothing about how to make the system work and that they would get no help from the Western nations. Instead the Western nations saw in their incompetent floundering an opportunity to destroy the Eastern bloc, in particular the principal flag-bearer, forever.

Even as the inability to manage a free market resulted in galloping inflation, destruction of State enterprises and massive unemployment, the hedge funds and the Western financial institutions moved in to devalue the currencies and make debt defaulters of this once powerful enemy. Despite knowing that these people could not manage a free market liberal democracy at all, they were nevertheless urged and threatened into continuing anyhow. There was no going back for the Eastern bloc countries.

The destruction of the Eastern bloc was complete. It could never again militarily challenge the Western liberal democratic free marketeers. Now there would be only one choice for the world, and no defection would be possible for the countries of the world, big or small. With this the liberal democratic free market capitalists saw no more need to be gentle in spreading their systems or in profiting from them. No one would be allowed any other political or economic system except what was prescribed by the sole dominant bloc. The true ugliness of Western capitalism revealed itself, backed by the military might of capitalism's greatest proponent.

For the small countries, the demise of the Eastern bloc is a major disaster. Now they are exposed to pressures which they cannot resist, and very quickly they learned that the free marketeers intend to milk them dry. As for their politics, the instability of the liberal democratic system, which comes with a lack of understanding of its intricacies by the leaders as well as the people, meant that they would stay in a state of continuous turmoil, verging on anarchy.

A few countries apparently managed to grow and prosper, but not for long. The currency manipulators and short-term investors of the rich soon impoverished these countries through devaluing their currencies and share prices. Impoverished and politically unstable, they were forced to borrow from the International Monetary Fund (IMF). Whether by design or through sheer lack of understanding, the economic regime imposed by the IMF further destroyed their economies. Soon their political freedom was also subverted, and many had to accept political direction by the IMF, or the loans would not be made available. For practical purposes, there was no more independence.

So for the small independent countries of the world, the future looks bleak. They are now being told that the world should be borderless, that capital, goods and services should flow freely between countries. There should be no discriminatory taxes to protect local industries or products. Local banks, industries and products must compete on the same footing as imported products, and their banks and industries must compete with foreign banks and industries set up in their countries. No conditions must be attached to foreign banks and businesses which want to set up operations in their countries. They must have national status like those given to local businesses. This way, it is said, a level playing field will be created and competition will be fair.

But can competition between giants and dwarfs be fair even if the playing field is level? The giant banks, corporations and industries from the rich countries, with huge local markets, can afford to lose money in a small foreign country when they make huge profits at home and elsewhere. The small businesses in the small countries will go bankrupt if they lose money repeatedly. In the end they will have to sell to the giant foreign companies or close down altogether. There will be no more big local companies; there will be only branches of large foreign companies who will indulge in transfer pricing and will repatriate most of their profit.

The efficient may produce better and cheaper goods, but if a country does not export its own products to earn foreign exchange it will not be able to pay for imports. Cheap high-quality goods mean nothing if you have no money to pay for them.

The markets of the poor countries may not be big, but impoverishing them would result in lost sales for the rich. That was what happened when the currency traders impoverished the countries they attacked. These countries could not buy the products of the rich; that is, the rich lost their markets, and world trade contracted. Free, unrestricted flow of goods and services across borders may be good for a while, but eventually it will destroy markets and result in contraction of world trade. The world would actually become poorer because of free trade.

After the last war, the confrontation between East and West led to most of the colonies being liberated and becoming independent countries. Being independent meant the right to govern their countries themselves. Unaccustomed to wielding so much power, many of these Governments failed. They became hopelessly indebted to the banks of the rich countries. Their people suffered from incompetent and frequently oppressive rule. But the principle that prevailed in the third quarter of the twentieth century was that no one should interfere in the internal affairs of a nation. That, in fact, was the essence of independence.

As long as the world was divided into Eastern and Western blocs, this principle was respected. But then a president decided that his country had a right and a duty to see that human rights were not abused anywhere in the world, irrespective of borders and the independence of nations. No one conferred this right on this crusading president. But small things like that were not going to stop him.

The claim to victory of the West in the Gulf War was regarded as a moral endorsement of the right of the powerful to interfere in any country's internal affairs. Soon, it was not just human rights. Systems of government and of the administration of justice and the financial and commercial systems came under scrutiny of the powerful countries. They insist that there must be only one way of administering a country, and that is the liberal democratic way. They insist that there can be only one economic system for the whole world, and that is the free market system. They insist that there must be openness in everything, transparency, separation of the

private from the public sectors, non-discrimination between ethnic groups, and no discrimination against foreigners in favour of nationals.

All these and more sound very good. They have apparently worked for the developed countries of the West, making them rich and powerful, giving their people high standards of living. But will they work for everyone? They seem to have forgotten that they took centuries to make their system work. Their transition from feudal oppressive rule was based in copious blood. Both rich and poor were massacred as reforms were forced by a succession of uncaring tyrants, many elected by the people.

Even today their system has not brought freedom and equity to large segments of their people, yet they insist that all the countries of the world, new or old, must immediately adopt the only system of government — their system, their liberal democratic system. The newly independent countries, which knew only the authoritarian system of government, cannot but fail. The former Communist countries in particular found themselves unable to cope with the destabilizing challenges directed at government authority in a liberal democracy.

But the new countries are not going to be allowed time to learn and operate the system. They must change now, immediately. If their countries are destabilized, if their people suffer, if they regress economically, that is irrelevant. The important thing is that they must democratize and liberalize. If they fail to do so, they will be forced to do so through arm-twisting, trade sanctions and military action, if necessary.

That these measures are more oppressive than those of the disapproved regimes and systems does not matter. The adoption of the approved system would destabilize the countries further and cause further suffering. All this does not matter, because the most important thing is the adoption of the system, not the benefit to be derived from it.

It is the same with economic management. There must be liberalization and deregulation. The Government should not help the business sector, should not give it any protection. If businesses are attacked by outside forces, fairly or unfairly, and they lose, then let them die. They must be inefficient if they lose, and the world has no time or sympathy for inefficient losers.

And so giant currency traders, their funds leveraged one hundred times or more, are pitted against central banks with limited reserves and without leveraging rights. The economies of whole countries and regions are destroyed, but the cries for protection by these countries are ignored. The fields are level, and the free movement of capital is a part of the secret free trade. Everyone must accept whatever happens because it is free trade. All the currency traders are doing is to discipline Governments so that they conform to the system and do away with their bad old system.

In the financial crisis, Governments may not help businesses to recover. To do that means a bail-out of cronies. Let them die; let there be blood. Only then will Governments be considered serious in wanting to reform their systems, to adopt best practices, world standards and the only proper way to administer the economy. If the Government becomes bankrupt in trying to do this, that is all right. The important thing is to do things correctly, even if the country is destroyed, the people starve to death, anarchy reigns and the Government overthrown.

There is a touching concern on the part of the West over human rights. But the definition of human rights seems limited to an individual's right of dissent against the Government. Millions of people in a country will be made to suffer through sanctions and even bombings in order that a few dissenters may enjoy their rights of dissent. Apparently the rest of the population, hundreds of millions of them sometimes, have no rights. Their rights are not considered human rights. Thus depriving millions of the right to work as a result of currency trading is not considered as a violation of human rights. In the Western perception only individuals have rights; the masses do not.

The concern over child labour and sweatshop factories is expressive of a sense of caring. Unfortunately the concern is shown only when the products of child labour and sweatshops compete successfully with the products of highly paid, high-living four-day-a-week workers in the developed countries.

Child labour and sweatshops are not something which anyone would defend, but consider the extreme poverty of the people in some countries. They have no capital, no technology or expertise, no markets at home, no Harvard-trained managers. All they have is low-cost labour. For the workers, the tiny wages that they earn are far better than starvation and death. If we really care, then invest and pay high wages. The sweatshops will disappear and adults will earn enough to feed their

children. Forcing them to stop child labour and sweatshops will only cause more suffering for their people. Telling them to stop producing children is not a solution either. We know that the poor have a higher birth rate than the rich. To stop the population explosion which the West is worried about, enrich these people. Closing their sweatshops and stopping their children from working will only impoverish them further and cause them to have more children.

With the end of the East-West confrontation, conflicts have increased instead of decreased. The Palestinian problem is still not resolved, but the sanctions against and the bombing of Iraq, the sanctions against Libya, the conflicts resulting from the break-up of the Soviet Union, and the stirring up of unrest and rebellions, or near-rebellions, by open support for insurrection go on. Before, it was the Communists who stirred up rebellion everywhere, including in Malaysia. Now we have the liberal democrats doing exactly the same in the same manner, complete with supply of arms. Whether it is a communist or a liberal democratic insurrection, the people suffer not one bit less.

The United Nations seems helpless. Indeed, it is often bypassed by the big and the powerful. Now groupings of powerful nations or even one nation by itself seem to decide when to step in and when to step out. While they like to wield power, they are inordinately unwilling to pay the price. "Tele-wars" are conducted using high technology, such as the so-called pinpoint bombings, in order to avoid body bags coming home. This unwillingness to face the enemy often results in the unnecessary killing of innocent people and the destruction of the wrong targets.

Unfortunately, no one should expect any change for as long as the United Nations belongs to the permanent five. The structure of the United Nations will continue to reflect the glorious victory of these nations 50 years ago. For the small countries, yearly speeches and various anniversary speeches will be allowed. Occasionally there will be membership in the Security Council. But despite the fact that at least three of the permanent five are vociferous advocates of democracy, there will be no democracy in the United Nations. The only saving grace is the agencies and their good work.

Unfortunately, some in the United Nations have rather unusual principles. Normally a neutral or unbiased person would be chosen to study, report on and give an opinion or pass judgment on something. But the United Nations chose a person well-known for his virulent attacks against the Malaysian judiciary to report on that institution. The United Nations then conferred on him total immunity with respect to the laws of his country without reference to or consent by the country. This immunity apparently extends beyond his task of reporting his findings to the United Nations. He may publish his opinions and defame people and the subject of his study anywhere and everywhere. Is there no limit to a United Nations Commissioner's or Rapporteur's immunity?

We are told that Governments must not interfere with the judiciary. Yet in this case the Government is expected to instruct the judiciary not to act against this United Nations Commissioner for breaking the laws of the country. I am not blaming the Secretary-General for this. It is the peculiar system and principles which guide the choice of the United Nations Commissioner or Rapporteur that I find unacceptable. Nor do I think it proper to hint at dire consequences for the Malaysian nation if this man is not freed from court action for open contempt and defamation. There is something not right here which the United Nations needs to look into.

But small countries lack a public forum to air their views freely. The Western media distorts everything that they say or do. Again we are expected to give immunity to western journalists; they may break our laws, but no legal action may be taken against them. I would like to point out that in Malaysia not even the King and the hereditary Sultans are above the law.

This then is the scenario in the last quarter of the twentieth century. We will carry this baggage into the twenty-first century and the new millennium. For the poor and the weak, for the aspiring tigers and dragons of Asia, the twenty-first century does not look very promising. Everything will continue to be cooked in the West. Just as communism and socialism came from the West, liberal democracy, globalization, a borderless world, deregulation, unfettered free flows of capital and their flights to quality, the disciplining of Governments by the market and by currency traders, and a host of other ideas all come from the West. And what is from the West is universal. Other values and cultures are superfluous and unnecessary. If they remain, there will be a clash of civilizations. To avoid this clash there should be only one civilization in the world. Everything should be standardized according to Western best practices. They may change only if the West changes. Thus the globalized world will be totally uniform. Variety is equal to intransigence and must therefore be eliminated.

Malaysia has just gone through a very traumatic experience. In a matter of weeks, 42 years of hard work to develop the country was destroyed, in particular the affirmative action to reduce the enmity between races in Malaysia.

We have devised our own formula for recovery. With the blessings of Allah, we have turned around and are on the road to recovery. But we are being pressured to abandon our currency control. We do not understand why. It has done us a lot of good. It has done no harm to anybody except a few thousand rich currency manipulators. Foreigners doing real business in our country have profited from the so-called controls. But we are still being urged to conform to an international financial system which has enabled the unscrupulous to destroy the wealth of many nations.

No serious attempt is being made to change the international financial system. So far there is only talk about intentions. But the threat of financial, economic and political destabilization remains.

Malaysia wishes only to be allowed to manage things in its own way, in the interests of its own people. We will not harm others. We are not turning our backs on the world. We have always cooperated with the rest of the world, in particular with the United Nations. We will continue to do our bit for world peace. Just as we accept criticism, warranted and unwarranted, we hope others will also tolerate our criticism of them. Free speech would be meaningless if criticism could be directed only at the poor and the weak and never at the rich and powerful. In criticizing others, we are only exercising our right to freedom of expression.

We are not too enchanted by the prospects we foresee for the next century. But I can assure the Assembly that we will be a responsible nation, friendly towards all who are friendly towards us and harbouring no bad intentions towards anyone.

The President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the Prime Minister of Malaysia for the statement he has just made.

Mr. Mahathir Mohamad, Prime Minister of Malaysia, was escorted from the rostrum.

The President: I now give the floor to the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Australia, His Excellency The Honourable Alexander Downer.

Mr. Downer (Australia): May I begin by adding my congratulations to those of my colleagues on your election, Sir, as President of the General Assembly at its fifty-fourth session. You are no stranger to these halls — you were here first as an observer and later as a representative. You bring a wealth of experience to your position, and we are pleased to see Namibia taking leadership roles in both the General Assembly and the Security Council.

Before I move to the main substance of my remarks today, I want to take this opportunity to mention two matters.

First, I welcome the three new members of the United Nations: Kiribati, Nauru and Tonga. Having worked closely with these three countries in our own Asia-Pacific community, it is a particular pleasure for me, as the Foreign Minister of Australia, now to have the opportunity to take that cooperation into this larger family of nations.

The second matter is one that seized the attention of the entire Australian population earlier this year: the fate of two CARE Australia workers, Steve Pratt and Peter Wallace, who were imprisoned by the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia. Thanks in no small measure to the support of the international community, Steve and Peter were released from prison on 1 September. The efforts of Secretary-General Kofi Annan, the High Commissioner for Refugees, Mrs. Ogata and the High Commissioner for Human Rights, Mrs. Robinson, and the continued support of the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, were invaluable in gaining the men's release.

I would also like to thank President Ahtisaari of Finland, the Greek Government, Nelson Mandela, Pope John Paul and the many other individuals who generously lent their support to this cause. The international community's cooperation in this case demonstrates the strong commitment we share to protecting our humanitarian workers from persecution, and to ensuring their capacity to carry out their important work in safety. Australia will continue to support international efforts to secure the release of Branko Jelen, a Yugoslav national and an employee of CARE Australia, who continues to serve time in a Yugoslav prison.

You, Mr. President, take up your responsibilities at a most auspicious time, as the nations of the world enter a new millennium. As they do so, it is appropriate for us

to reflect on the past and the future of the United Nations, what it has achieved and what tasks remain unfulfilled. Of course, the various aspects of this subject are as numerous and diverse as the operations of the United Nations itself, which has evolved from a modest operation in the early days after the end of the Second World War to become an Organization that touches on just about every facet of human existence.

Today I want to concentrate on just two matters. The first is perhaps the most fundamental task before this Organization: the maintenance of global peace and security through humanitarian intervention. This is a subject that has been at the centre of my own thinking, especially over recent weeks because of the role Australia has played in the resolution of the conflict in East Timor. I believe that the activities of the United Nations in that Territory stand as an example of the kind of work to which this Organization can really add value.

The other matter — the reform of the United Nations — is on the face of it a rather prosaic matter. But, in truth, reform is the key to every single function of this Organization, for without it we cannot hope to equip the United Nations to face the demands of our ever-changing international environment. The United Nations must change and adapt, or become increasingly irrelevant.

I turn now to the question of the future of East Timor. It is now just over a week since the first elements of the International Force in East Timor (INTERFET) began arriving in Dili to commence the task set for it under Security Council resolution 1264 (1999) of 15 September to restore peace and security in East Timor, to protect and support the United Nations Mission in East Timor in carrying out its tasks and, within force capabilities, to facilitate humanitarian assistance programmes.

I am pleased to report that INTERFET's deployment has been smooth and peaceful, and that elements of the force are now spreading across the territory of East Timor. It has begun the vital work of bringing peace back to the troubled island, and of assisting in creating the right climate for the provision of the food, shelter and medical assistance that the East Timorese desperately require. This is the latest chapter in the long association of the United Nations with East Timor, an association that has lasted for more than a quarter of a century. The process that has brought us here has been long and difficult, but at last we may be approaching a peaceful resolution of the tragedy that has beset the East Timorese people for so long.

The fact that we have arrived at this point owes much to President Habibie of Indonesia. It was President Habibie who led his country down the path of democracy after the departure of former President Soeharto. Under President Habibie's guidance, Indonesia held its first democratic elections in more than four decades, and it now awaits the election of its next President. It was also President Habibie who decided to allow the people of East Timor to choose between greater autonomy within Indonesia and independence. Those were momentous decisions — decisions that reflect the massive strides that Indonesian society has made in just a few short months. Australia stood by the Indonesian people as they began their transition to democracy, and we will continue to do so in the years ahead.

Regardless of the problems that have beset the transition process in East Timor, President Habibie and his administration deserve full credit for actually initiating that process. I also want to make special mention of the role played by the Secretary-General, Mr. Kofi Annan, in seeking a peaceful resolution of East Timor's status.

The conclusion on 5 May this year of the tripartite Agreement among Portugal, Indonesia and the United Nations owed much to the hard work and perseverance of the Secretary-General, who helped guide the parties towards a settlement that provided for a credible and orderly ballot on East Timor's future. In doing so, he maintained the honourable tradition of his predecessors as Secretary-General, who since 1983 had been working with Portugal and Indonesia towards a comprehensive and just solution to the region's difficulties.

It would be remiss of me if I did not also mention the sterling work done both before and after the conclusion of the Agreement by the Secretary-General's Personal Representative, Ambassador Jamsheed Marker, and his deputy, Francesc Vendrell. The work of those two men was crucial to the successful outcome of the negotiations and to the holding of the ballot in East Timor.

Of course, the conclusion of the tripartite Agreement was just the beginning of the process to allow the East Timorese to decide their own fate. With the establishment by the Security Council on 11 June of the United Nations Mission in East Timor (UNAMET), the practical work of holding the popular consultation got under way. Under the leadership of Ian Martin, UNAMET began the difficult and often dangerous task of organizing a vote in only 12 short weeks. Thanks to the

enthusiasm and application of Ian Martin and his team, that task was accomplished with results that few could have ever dreamed of. The fact that more than 450,000 people were able to register to vote and that 98.6 per cent of them actually did so is a remarkable tribute to the courage and the thirst for democracy of the East Timorese people.

But it is also a tribute to the effectiveness of UNAMET and its staff, and a fine example of how effective the United Nations can be in situations of conflict and transition. The work done by UNAMET staff in the days before the ballot and in the tragic days following it deserves our highest praise. Unarmed, in a tense and emotionally charged atmosphere, they carried out their duties magnificently. In particular, the military liaison and civilian police components of UNAMET, led respectively by Brigadier General Rezaqul Haider of Bangladesh and Commissioner Alan Mills of Australia, played crucial roles as the interface between UNAMET and the Indonesian police and military authorities.

UNAMET carried out its work at great risk to the staff involved, and, tragically, several locally engaged employees paid for their dedication with their lives. That fact is a stark reminder of the great personal cost that is often associated with United Nations operations, and a reminder to us all of the need to make the security and personal safety of United Nations staff one of our most urgent priorities. The United Nations must rely on its staff to carry out its various mandates. A threat to the person of a United Nations staff member must be treated as a threat against the United Nations itself.

It is a matter of unfortunate record that the upsurge of violence in East Timor after the ballot on 30 August swept up not just United Nations staff members, but hundreds and maybe thousands of East Timorese. The world has witnessed the most horrible cruelty visited on the island's population by people who were unwilling to accept the outcome of the vote. To the great credit again of President Habibie, he sought military assistance through the Security Council. In response, the Security Council delivered a strong resolution and a positive mandate for peacekeeping operations, a mandate that will ensure that the will of the East Timorese people, as expressed in the 30 August vote, will be carried out.

We in Australia have been very heartened by the positive international response to the call for military forces to make up the international force in East Timor and its successor peacekeeping force. As I have mentioned, the international forces under the command of Major-General Peter Cosgrove, have begun to restore order in East Timor. There are currently some 3,200 personnel on the ground, drawn from a range of countries, with strong representation from our own Asia-Pacific region. The large number of countries participating in the force, and their wide geographical representation, is evidence of the widespread international determination to see a peaceful and orderly transition in East Timor's status.

I am also very pleased to note that UNAMET personnel have now returned to the island, and will be able to continue their important work.

In discussing the activities of the United Nations in East Timor, I must also mention the humanitarian work done by United Nations agencies. Mrs. Sadako Ogata, the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, has travelled to West Timor to examine the plight of East Timorese refugees in that territory, and Australia fully supports her efforts.

Australia is also the staging point for humanitarian assistance operations being carried out by agencies such as the World Food Programme and the United Nations Children's Fund. Additional relief efforts are also planned by the World Health Organization and the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations. Australia has already pledged $7 million towards the humanitarian efforts of United Nations agencies and other organizations.

The United Nations is also seeking to address the human rights violations that have been widespread in East Timor. Security Council resolution 1264 (1999) called on those responsible for violence in East Timor to be brought to justice. Australia supports efforts by the Indonesian Government and the United Nations to bring to account those responsible for the grievous acts of criminal violence visited upon the East Timorese people, and will offer all appropriate assistance in this regard.

More generally, there is now an urgent need to move as soon as possible to the third phase of the United Nations plan for East Timor. This will require all parties, most especially Indonesia and Portugal, to work closely with the Secretariat. Australia will do what it can to assist in this process, which will build the foundation for the transition in the territory's status.

In its activities in East Timor, the United Nations has demonstrated some of its fundamental strengths as an organization. It is helping to bring about the resolution of

an international problem that had been festering for a quarter of a century. It provided the infrastructure that allowed a free and fair expression of the will of the East Timorese people. And when the security situation could not be controlled, it facilitated the creation of an international force to put the transition process back on track and end gross violations of human rights.

I have been struck by the deep historical resonances of this process, for when the United Nations was established at the end of the Second World War, part of its rationale as an organization was to have been the impartial and objective resolution of international problems, free of the old cycles of retribution through resort to aggression. The ancient resort to armed force and the notion that might was right were to have been overturned, and in their place the community of nations was to cooperate to settle international disputes and solve global problems. The world, having won a victory over nazism, was determined that similar evils would never again prevail.

Well, we have seen plenty of occasions in the past 50 years where practice has not measured up to the ideals. But every now and then, the process works, and I believe that many elements of the work of the United Nations in East Timor are evidence of that. Of course, that is not to say that the process cannot be improved; of course it can. But if we can identify and build upon the positive elements of our East Timor experience, I believe that we can not only improve the situation of the people of that territory, but may also be able to provide a speedier and more thorough resolution of other international crises in the future.

We need also to draw lessons from the negative aspects of events in East Timor. Through our efforts there, we have shown what the United Nations can do well. Let us build on that effectiveness, and strive for an organization that is even more relevant to global peace and security in the next millennium.

I now turn to another aspect of increased effectiveness: the question of United Nations reform. In a recent report on preparations for the Millennium Assembly and the millennium summit, the Secretary-General described the United Nations as a unique institution. No one could disagree that the contribution of the United Nations to the pursuit of peace and security, to the economic and social advancement of all peoples and to the promotion of human rights over the last 50 years or so has been not just of enormous value, but also truly unique in world history.

The twenty-first century, however, will bring with it new challenges and, I hope, new opportunities.

Under the direction of Kofi Annan, this Organization has begun the important and necessary steps to equip itself to face these challenges through genuine administrative and management reform. This has included promising changes in financial and personnel practices, significant economies, improving coordination between United Nations bodies, significant rationalization of Secretariat structures and more efficient use of technology. Such reforms make the work of the United Nations more efficient and provide real savings for the Organization. Those savings can then be used for other programmes that benefit all Member States, but particularly the developing Members of the United Nations.

The challenge for the United Nations — and, let us all recognize its Member States — is to ensure that this momentum is sustained and taken forward. A former Australian Prime Minister, Sir Robert Menzies, said over 40 years ago that "when we talk of the United Nations, we should remember what it is in fact, and not be led off by dreams of what we would like it to be in another kind of world."

We need to accept that the United Nations exists in a real world and be realistic about what it can achieve. We need to ensure that the Organization's structures and processes better reflect the realities of the twenty-first century. We need an expanded, more representative and more transparent Security Council, and an electoral group system which reflects the geo-political and economic realities of today rather than the early nineteen sixties. To achieve real reforms on these and other subjects, Member States must work together in a sustained and cooperative manner. And they must also demonstrate their commitment to the Organization by paying their contributions on time and in full.

Reform of the United Nations means building a stronger and more effective Organization that can deliver on its commitments to the world's people. It means less waste and more practical activities. It means developing an Organization that is equipped to meet whatever challenges the new century may bring.
Ultimately, it means creating a United Nations that can maintain its relevance when many national and international institutions are falling by the wayside, made obsolete by the rapid pace of change.

I want to conclude my remarks with a call for the United Nations to concentrate on building on its strengths. I have mentioned the need to stick with a programme of thorough and fundamental reform, for that is a basic prerequisite for the continued effectiveness of the Organization. But I have also mentioned the United Nations work in East Timor as an example of how the Organization can, and does, make a real difference in the resolution of complex and challenging foreign policy and humanitarian problems. Not only was the United Nations able to administer a ballot in circumstances in which many observers thought the task impossible, but it was also able to provide for the insertion of a peacekeeping force when law and order broke down. Those who wished to exterminate an entire community were foiled.

Those are great strengths. But we need to be able to consolidate them to make the United Nations a more effective Organization. We must, for example, be able to ensure that the United Nations can intervene quickly when rapidly deteriorating conditions threaten entire nations. That was the lesson of Rwanda. I was struck by the comments made by the Secretary-General on this subject when he addressed the Assembly last week. As the Secretary-General suggests, changing international circumstances — including the spread of notions of individual rights and the idea that the international community has a responsibility to respond effectively to humanitarian crises — are challenging traditional notions of national sovereignty. The United Nations needs to focus on these challenges and begin the process of defining when and how the Organization should act in the face of humanitarian crises.

It may be an old cliché to say that the world is growing ever smaller, but it is true just the same. In days gone by, the nations of the world may have been forgiven if they acted too slowly in the face of a humanitarian crisis. Tales of atrocities, famine and natural disaster took weeks or months to filter out from the more inaccessible areas of the globe. Today, those same stories are likely to be on television screens within hours, or even minutes.

In the face of such indisputable evidence, Governments will be forced to act. Those that resist will have to face a domestic and international audience as well informed as they. That is the kind of environment in which the United Nations will increasingly have to function, where the results of inaction will be seen instantly and the consequences of failure subject to instant and very telling scrutiny.

Some will be concerned about interference in national sovereignty, and obviously that is an important and legitimate concern. Others will say that the greater principle is that of natural human solidarity. But whatever view is correct, this environment is a fact we now have to deal with, whether we like it or whether we don't. When we all gather here in New York each year, it is easy to get caught up in the daily business of the United Nations, in the resolutions, the committee meetings, the briefings and the caucusing.

How often do we stop, and remind ourselves of the purposes for which we meet? If we genuinely wish to uphold the Charter, if we really do want to maintain international peace and security, help develop our economic and social strengths and promote respect for human rights and fundamental reforms, surely we can start by upholding the most basic right of all, that of life.

In the face of acts of genocide, or of human rights abuses on a horrendous scale, the nations of the world must act. I am a firm realist when it comes to foreign policy, but am also a great believer in the value of idealism. More than 50 years ago, our predecessors created the United Nations in the firm hope that there could be a new international order to replace the old, a spirit of cooperative international action that could avoid the competition and aggression that caused two world wars.

As we approach the end of this century, it is true that the United Nations has not lived up to all the hopes of its founders. But the great promise of the Organization remains. The United Nations response to developments in East Timor has shown just what positive action on the part of this Organization can accomplish. We know the great things this body can achieve. Let us all try to build on those achievements, so that we may create an Organization that can truly address the most pressing problems of the international community. We can build an active and practical United Nations to meet both the aspirations of its Member nations and, also, the legitimate needs of all humanity.

Mr. President: I next give the floor to the Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Foreign Affairs of Israel, His Excellency Mr. David Levy.

Mr. Levy: (Israel) (*spoke in Hebrew; English text furnished by the delegation*): The fifty-fourth session of the General Assembly of the United Nations takes place at a time marking humanity's crossing into the next

millennium. It emerges as a link in the long chain of tumultuous events that have reshaped the map of the family of nations.

The United Nations was born against the backdrop of the destruction and desolation of the Second World War, the most bitter, deadly and inhumane war known to mankind. The descent of the Nazi regime to the depths of evil was like an eclipse in the history of civilization and will be recalled in history as a nightmare in which man created the devil, who wreaked devastation, destruction, terror and annihilation upon the world. The stand taken by the Allied forces against the Nazi monster, and the creation of the United Nations in April 1945, on the verge of the defeat of the forces of destruction, was an act that marked the return of humanity to its senses, to salvage the future of mankind.

In this month when we mark 60 years since the outbreak of the most horrible of wars, we are strengthened more than ever in our sense of hope and confidence in the necessity of the United Nations and of its activities throughout the world. The various agencies of the United Nations work to enhance world health and tend the sick; to supply the needy with food and nourishment; to build bridges between cultures; to promote education and overcome ignorance; to instil hope into the lives of refugees and displaced persons; and to assist the victims of disasters, whether natural or man-made.

The soldiers of the United Nations forces are the true peacekeepers of our age. In its corps are soldiers from all the nations of the world. At times they risk their lives in areas riddled with conflict and violence around the world, whether their United Nations mandate is to make peace or to be observers that safeguard the peace. These distinctions, important as they may be to the policy makers and shapers of international relations, have no meaning to the individual United Nations soldier, posted far from his country, who brings hope and tranquillity to places fraught with tragedy, suffering and violence.

After many centuries of violence and war, of enslavement and destructiveness in the name of murderous ideologies, after decades of cold war and polarized world alliances of the East and the West, the human race is now making great strides down the paths of peace and reconciliation. Before our very eyes, a process is enveloping the world, signalling hope for the future. Mankind is adopting a new path, the path of the prophet Isaiah, who as far back as 2,600 years ago prophesied that the day would come when

> "they shall beat their swords into ploughshares, and their spears into pruning-hooks: nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more." *(The Holy Bible, Isaiah 2:4)*

This prophecy — which has been adopted by the United Nations as a source of hope, as the symbol of the victory of the good in human beings over evil — should serve today more than ever as a beacon and a path for all who cherish peace around the world and for their representatives gathered here today.

The world has become more open. Satellites, the Internet and telecommunications networks shorten geographical and cultural distances. The political and ideological blocs of the past have disintegrated, and the walls of animosity have fallen along with the tyrants and dictators who built them. They are being replaced by new blocs, some of which are in the process of being created where development and prosperity reign. I hope and believe that these beneficial transformations will also occur in the Middle East.

In our region, too, the light of hope has been rekindled. We are now in the midst of a political process, the objective of which is to reach peace between States and reconciliation between peoples. Israel aspires to reach a comprehensive peace with its neighbours, a peace of harmony. Israel will not be satisfied with a merely political or strategic peace. In our eyes, the absence of war is not the peace we aspire to achieve.

May I be allowed to emphasize once again that peace means a culture of peace: peace means no more threats of violence, whether implied or categorical; peace entails the end of boycotts, the end of contempt and defamation, the end of incitement and confrontation... peace is also a language of peace: it is the way leaders address their nations, teachers teach their students and religious leaders inspire their followers.

At a time when various kinds of religious extremism are rearing their heads and eroding human wisdom and human freedom, it is essential that inter-faith dialogue be strengthened and that the religions be manifested in their enlightened forms, which sanctify tolerance and coexistence.

On the way to achieving peace in our region, we often find ourselves confronted with contradictory realities. Parallel to the political process, our negotiating partners are conducting a constant political war against

Israel in various international forums, including from the podium of this Assembly. This dualism is inconsistent with the peace process and is intolerable, as are the extreme decisions taken by the Arab League against Israel. These decisions are not in keeping with the spirit of peace, as expressed in the Sharm el-Sheikh Memorandum.

We hoped for and expected a different atmosphere, one that would complement the impetus initiated by the new Government in Israel. We have been saddened to witness events that undermine the essence of peace. These events can be defined only as anti-peace resolutions.

Engaging in a peace process, on the one hand, and maintaining anti-Israel declarations and resolutions, on the other, raises some serious concerns about our negotiating partners and their concept of peace. Is it a peace of normalization with open borders, or is it only one of temporary initial recognition? Will our relations with the Gulf and Maghreb countries, such as Morocco, Tunisia, Mauritania, Qatar and Oman, be allowed to expand and develop? Or will these relations remain hostage to mood swings after each and every difficulty in the negotiations or whenever there is disagreement? Continued doubts about these cardinal questions cannot be tolerated in the light of the heavy price and grave risks that Israel is taking upon itself in this process.

Three weeks ago, on 4 September, Israel and the Palestinian Authority signed the Sharm el-Sheikh Memorandum, which for the first time creates a direct, chronological, political and conceptual link between the Interim Agreements and the final status agreement. On 13 September, the final status talks were renewed between Israelis and Palestinians.

We are determined to reach a framework agreement that will form the basis of the final status agreement by February 2000, as stated and agreed upon in the Sharm el-Sheikh Memorandum. In this framework we will select the issues and set an agenda for the final status agreement. The topics at hand are known, as are the differing vantage points and positions of each side. The differences can be resolved only by direct negotiations.

Regarding the final status, I wish to affirm from this podium that when we refer to political separation as one of the prime concepts of the permanent settlement, we are also saying that, for the benefit of both sides, we should not necessarily sever ties that are vital to coexistence in the various spheres of living.

From Israel's perspective, there is no competition and never has been any between the different negotiating tracks. Israel also aspires to reach peace with Syria, our neighbour to the north. This is, after all, in the higher common interests of both Israel and Syria. However, along with these common interests, the following point must be made clear: A democratic country like Israel cannot accept a precondition to beginning the talks that requires a prior acceptance of the final outcome as dictated by the extreme and dogged formulas of the opposing side.

We must maintain the momentum of good will so that we can face our children, Syrian and Israeli alike, with a clear conscience and say to them in all honesty: We tried everything and did our utmost. I call upon the leaders of Syria, in view of what we have gone through together, to cease hesitating. It is time to talk. Meetings and discussion are not political sacrifices — they are basic necessities.

On the road to a comprehensive peace, we wish to see Lebanon join the camp of peacemakers. The anomaly which has developed in its territory must come to an end. We have never had nor do we have now any territorial claims or disputes with Lebanon. Our one and only interest is to guarantee the safety and security of our citizens. I must say that, regrettably, the Government of Lebanon has for many years failed to enforce its sovereignty in the southern part of Lebanon and to disarm Hezbollah. I hope that this situation will improve and that Israel, within the framework of an agreement, will be able to leave the southern part of Lebanon.

Nevertheless, with that as our ambition, I wish to emphasize that we will not be held hostage much longer on this track to a stubborn and defiant attitude. We will make our own independent decisions, as we see fit, in order to ensure our protection and our vital interests, taking all options under consideration.

A reconciliation between Israel and its neighbours must extend the promise that all the peoples of the region may reap the benefits of peace. Normalization must not be viewed as a one-sided gesture. As a natural outcome of peaceful coexistence, normalization is not in the service of one particular party. It is in the interests of all the nations of the region.

We hope to renew the multilateral tracks as early as this year. There is a need for close cooperation in regional multilateral projects. Our region has tremendous

potential. In order to fully realize this potential, we must establish a mechanism of true cooperation among the States of the region. This cooperation would clearly be to the benefit of all of us in the region.

The scarcity of water in our region, which will only get worse, may impose a new way of life on the inhabitants of the Middle East in the coming years. Israel is anticipating this problem and preparing for it, but in this case, as in others, cooperation in the region is essential and will benefit all sides.

The working groups of the multilateral tracks undertook various assignments of primary importance. Unfortunately, their activities have been frozen for irrelevant reasons. This is the time to resurrect them. Any delay or imposed condition is liable to undermine the peace process and delay the aid packages so essential to the peoples of the region. Throughout this important process, on the bilateral and the multilateral tracks alike, we are accompanied by the international community. First and foremost was the United States of America, along with the Russian Federation, the European Union, Canada, Norway, Japan, China and other countries and organizations that have assisted and continue to do so. Their key contributions earn them special commendation from this rostrum.

Egypt and Jordan were our first partners in breaking down the walls of enmity and in thawing relations in our region. Improving our relations with Egypt, as well as renewing the multilateral tracks, are essential to furthering the common objectives of the nations in our region. The relations between Israel and Jordan are an example of appropriate and favourable relations between neighbouring countries. We intend to strengthen and broaden the relations between the two nations in the economic, social and political realms.

As we march further along the difficult path of making peace, we look back with sorrow and sadness as we remember the pioneers who broke new ground and are no longer with us today: the late Menachem Begin, Anwar Saddat, Yitzhak Rabin, King Hussein and King Hassan II of Morocco. Their vision and their work inspire us to continue to work towards completing their enterprise of peacemaking.

We cannot afford to be disillusioned. Our region is neither North America nor Benelux. Even as we negotiate the peace process, we remain aware of the threats and dangers directed against us, threatening the stability of the entire region. The mix of extreme fundamentalism, on the one hand, and of the potential use of weapons of mass destruction, on the other, threatens the peace, stability and future of the entire region. This threat is not just an element of academic debates in the study of international relations, but a harsh reality which we must all face.

From this international platform, I call for a halt to all technological, scientific and other kinds of assistance to countries looking to obtain unconventional weapons, while threatening the existence of the State of Israel and the region as a whole.

The Persian Gulf War demonstrated that leadership lacking reason and stability poses a threat to all the countries in the region and to the world at large. The monitoring groups and machinery in Iraq must be immediately resumed. That is the obligation of the international community so long as the Iraqi regime seeks non-conventional weapons and threatens the region. The United Nations is the largest, most authoritative and most recognized international body. It should therefore be the one to take the initiative and the responsibility in curbing this danger.

Terrorism is an additional strategic enemy and we cannot come to terms with its existence. It is a threat not only to Israel, but to many other nations across the world as well. Terror knows no borders or civilized rules. There can be no coexistence with terror, either in the context of the negotiations conducted by Israel with its neighbours, or in the broader regional context. Anyone who believes that terror is a nuisance which can be tolerated is mistaken. Terror is in essence a strategic threat. A synthesized, coordinated and unrelenting approach must be adopted against it.

Here, in this building of stone and glass, reflecting the current image of our world today with its points of light and shadows of darkness, counterparts and enemies meet as friends and allies in the creation of a forum for discussion and coexistence. Discussion is the way to resolve conflict. It is also the way of tomorrow. Dialogue and common language are the tools of diplomacy, the raw material for the creation of a new reality and the foundation for a stable and safer society.

It was here in the General Assembly, at the beginning of the decade, that I first met with my Chinese counterpart. After 40 years of total dissociation between our two countries, we endeavoured to re-establish

diplomatic relations between Israel and China. It was also here that we laid the groundwork for establishing ties with the former Soviet Union, as well as with India, Nigeria and other States. These are only a few examples demonstrating the possibility in this arena for building a bridge between nations and States.

As a nation that experienced great difficulties, overcome only by accelerated development efforts, the State of Israel takes part in the international effort to aid others and share knowledge, experience and technology, experience which it has accumulated in various fields. The nation of Israel is proud of its ancient tradition of sharing and identifying with the world at large.

Through the Division for International Cooperation within the Israeli Foreign Ministry, Israel maintains ongoing projects and a broad range of training courses in Israel. We have demonstration units and we are conducting research. For example, a special medical centre was recently established in Mauritania and serves the many citizens of that State who suffer from chronic eye problems. Similarly, Israel invests great efforts and resources in training professionals to acquire the skills and abilities necessary for meeting the various challenges that engage many parts of the world.

In the more than 40 years since its inception, the Division for International Cooperation has trained more than 70,000 trainees from more than 120 countries, who have come to Israel and attended its training courses in the areas of agriculture, water resources, health and medicine, science, education and others.

In 1998 alone, some 155 courses were held in Israel on a variety of topics, with the participation of more than 4,000 trainees. Gladly, I can report that many of the trainees were from Middle Eastern countries. Fully 820 Palestinians participated in these courses over the past year, thereby helping to strengthen the bridges of peace which have been built between Israelis and Palestinians. In the same year, Israel ran more than 150 courses in over 60 different countries, with the participation of over 7,000 trainees. I am proud to point out that in many of the countries to which we sent Israeli experts, the local personnel managed to translate our goodwill into positive results on the ground, to the benefit of their people and their land.

Because of the reputation it has acquired, the Division for International Cooperation is also one of the central addresses in Israel to which people can turn in times of disaster around the world. We have recently witnessed just how essential such assistance can be in times of natural disasters. Israel has always responded favourably to requests for aid and relief, regardless of the political context or the state of diplomatic relations.

We wish to support and commend the United States of America, our friend and ally, an inspiration to us all in its efforts to promote the values of cooperation among nations. This is also the time to express our appreciation to the United States for its intensive efforts to bring true peace to the Middle East.

Even today in the United States we have witnessed again a new resort to the threat of boycott. The case at hand is the threat to declare a boycott against the American company Disney, because the company dared to allow Jerusalem to be portrayed in an exhibition celebrating the millennium. We condemn these threats and the use by certain Arab States of this anachronistic device. It has no place here or anywhere else in the world.

Over thousands of years, since the time of biblical King David, the builder of Jerusalem until the present day, Jerusalem has not served as the capital of any other nation in the world besides the nation of Israel, the Jewish people. Even after our forced exile from the land of Israel, we continued, generation after generation, to stay faithful to Jerusalem. The flame of Jerusalem was carried in our hearts as a hidden source of faith and hope.

In our wanderings, in the East and in the West, in the African deserts and on the outskirts of Siberia, from the golden age of Spain through the dark Inquisition, during the prosperous Europe of the romantic era to the charred ashes of the Holocaust, throughout all the above the eyes of the Jews and their prayers have been directed toward Jerusalem. Year after year, from father to son, the anthem of the Jewish nation has constantly been "Next Year in Jerusalem".

With the passing of those previous generations and exiles, we have had the privilege of being deemed worthy to return to Jerusalem, to rebuild the ruins, to rededicate the city as a centre radiating with beauty, open to all followers of all religions, as the poet has said, where freedom of all religions is a fact of life.

It is so upsetting then that even today, 51 years since the independence of the State of Israel, there are

still those who would deny our natural right to decide the location of our capital, a natural right given to every nation in the world. From Jerusalem, the city of David, I will quote from the original song of David on Jerusalem, in words which transcends the limits of time and retains their meaning in every generation:

> "Our feet shall stand within thy gates, oh Jerusalem. Jerusalem is built as a city that is bound firmly together." *(The Holy Bible, Psalm 122:2-3)*

Today, as before, from this podium we declare to the entire world, to our friends and people and those who are distant from us: Jerusalem, unified under Israeli sovereignty, is and will remain forever the capital of Israel.

The President: I call on the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Bahrain, His Excellency Shaikh Mohammed Bin Mubarak Al-Khalifa.

Mr. Al-Khalifa (Bahrain):*(spoke in Arabic)*: Mr. President, I have the pleasure of congratulating you on your election as President of the General Assembly at its fifty-fourth session. Confident that your experience and ability will strongly influence the successful outcome of the proceedings of this session, I assure you of my delegation's readiness to cooperate with you in fulfilling your task.

I would like to avail myself of this opportunity to express my thanks to His Excellency Didier Opertti Badán, President of the General Assembly at its fifty-third session, for his contribution to the achievements and success of that session. It is also my pleasure to express appreciation for the efforts that Secretary-General Kofi Annan has exerted in order to enable the Organization to fulfil its role in promoting international peace and security and in furthering international cooperation. I also extend the sincere congratulations of the State of Bahrain to the Kingdom of Tonga, the Republic of Nauru and the Republic of Kiribati upon their admission to the United Nations.

On 6 March 1999, the State of Bahrain announced to the people of Bahrain and to the world the sad news of the passing away of His Highness Shaikh 'Isa Bin Salman Al-Khalifa, may God grant him peace and mercy. He was a great and humane emir who loved people and was loved by the people by virtue of the remarkable traits he exhibited, which are the embodiment of the Bahraini character: loyalty, tolerance and civility. He, may God bestow His mercy upon him, championed national independence, the Constitution, the consultative process and the erection of the State institutions and the rule of law. He championed development, comprehensive renaissance and diversification of the national economy. He championed Gulf cooperation and Arab solidarity through the most difficult times and situations. He championed peace and international cooperation and genuine friendship among all peoples.

These causes were the legacy of the late emir, whose approach will continue to be the beacon that guides Bahrain as it moves forward along its national path and as it pursues Gulf cooperation, Arab solidarity, regional cooperation with neighbours and international cooperation with one and all.

In view of this session's special momentousness, as it is being held at a juncture between the end of a century and the beginning of a new millennium, it behoves us to pause and reflect on the experience of the United Nations over the last half century. It should again be emphasized that, as we approach the third millennium, we ought to direct our actions in consonance with the principles and purposes of the United Nations Charter, which are aimed at enhancing peace and economic and social development, in the interest of the world as a whole and on the basis of equality, justice and respect for law.

The Organization's experience of more than 50 years, with all its successes and setbacks in dealing with crises and in addressing the challenges facing the world, has demonstrated that the benefits of past experience should be taken into account as we prepare for the future. In this way we would be better equipped to contribute to the building of a new world and a brighter future and would be better committed to the United Nations. Some of that experience has proved that departure from the United Nations principles, Charter and resolutions has strained relations among many States and caused regional disputes and ethnic conflicts that have threatened security and stability in numerous regions of the world. Yet humanity has accomplished much during the last half century, particularly through United Nations involvement in the maintenance of international peace and security, sustainable development and international cooperation. Such United Nations endeavours deserve our appreciation and commitment so that we can alleviate the human suffering of those who are beset by poverty and lack of security, stability and the basic requirements of a life of dignity.

Hence, our common agreement on enhancing the vitally important role of the United Nations during the forthcoming millennium as the embodiment of the international community's conscience and its hope of building a better world in which our common human aspirations, as enshrined in the Charter, can be realized.

Bahrain's experience on the Security Council during the past two years has demonstrated that small countries are capable of effectively contributing to the causes of international peace and security. That experience has also reaffirmed Bahrain's convictions, most notably its adherence to the principles of the United Nations Charter and international legality, which reflect the will and desire of the international community to live in security, tolerance and peace. It has also confirmed the importance of strengthening the principles of equitable geographic representation and transparency as important values and principles in international relations. Such principles would enhance the Security Council's role in maintaining peace and security and help develop its ability to function effectively. Therefore, it is essential that efforts be exerted to reform the Council so that it can adequately reflect political realities and cope with the changing international climate during the next century.

The role of the Security Council in dealing with the questions of peace and security requires that the processes of peacekeeping and peace-building be interrelated in order to prevent the renewal of conflicts; hence Bahrain's request for the convening of an open meeting during its term as President of the Council last December, to consider the relationship between peacekeeping and peace-building. The extensive participation of members of the Council and other Members of the United Nations bears witness to the conviction of many Member States that such linkage is essential for the integration of political action with action in the field of economic and social development.

Bahrain's enthusiasm and interest in taking part in joint efforts to reach solutions for issues of peace and security have been demonstrated by its active and constructive participation whenever the Security Council has dealt with such questions. By virtue of the expertise that it has gained, Bahrain will be active, both within its region and at the international level, in furthering the principles of security, peace and stability.

Since the beginning of Bahrain's modern revival, our country has been building a modern State and a developed civil society on the basis of developing, preparing and qualifying the individual to deal with the demands of our time and to participate positively in present and future transformation. As a result, Bahrain has been able to build an open and developed economy that has made it possible for the country to realize comprehensive and sustainable human development, as reflected in its remarkable ranking in the human development index for five consecutive years. This is also reflected in the reports of the United Nations Development Programme, whose contributions and efforts in the field of development in many States we commend.

The State of Bahrain has long been aware of the importance of human development and has thus drawn up plans and policies for the development and utilization of the capabilities of Bahrainis in all fields. It has also enacted legislation encouraging women to join the workforce and to enter the labour market. Thus, the percentage of Bahraini women in the entire public sector labour force reached 33.5 per cent in 1998, and the total number of women in the private sector labour force has reached 20 per cent. The State of Bahrain takes pride in this achievement at the regional and international levels. It makes available equal opportunities to both men and women in the fields, *inter alia*, of education, health care and social welfare, as these are basic priorities of human rights for which Bahrain's efforts have been applauded by United Nations human rights bodies and experts.

In its new era under the leadership of its emir, His Highness Shaikh Hamad Bin Isa Al-Khalifa, Bahrain will continue on its course, which has allowed it to assume a prominent place economically and socially, thereby becoming an example of progressive development that takes into account both the global dimension and the preservation of its heritage and traditions.

Over the last two decades, the Gulf region has witnessed serious and painful events, the ramifications of which continue to pose a threat to the security and stability of this vital region, which is an important hub for world trade and for mutual, beneficial exchange between various nations of the world.

Those events have demonstrated that the maintenance and preservation of regional security can be based only on respect for and strict observation of principles that the State of Bahrain has always advocated, most notably respect for the status quo and the inviolability of established boundaries. Relations among countries of the region should be based on the principles of good neighbourliness, mutual respect and non-interference in the internal affairs of other States.

Recognition of each State's national sovereignty is an essential factor for the preservation of security and stability in the region, as is the settlement of disputes by peaceful means acceptable to the States concerned.

Accordingly, and reaffirming its consistent position with respect to a number of regional and international questions and its keen interest in the maintenance of security and peace in the world, particularly in the Gulf region, Bahrain again calls on Iraq to implement relevant Security Council resolutions, especially those relating to weapons of mass destruction and the release of prisoners of war and detainees of Kuwaiti and other nationalities.

At the same time, Bahrain urges anew that efforts be continued with a view to alleviating the suffering of the brotherly Iraqi people resulting from sanctions. It is also eager to ensure the independence, unity and territorial integrity of Iraq and opposes any interference in its internal affairs.

In the interest of security, stability and peace in the Gulf region, Bahrain wishes to emphasize again its support for all efforts aimed at settling by peaceful means the dispute between the United Arab Emirates and the Islamic Republic of Iran over the three islands, namely Abu Musa, Greater Tunb and Lesser Tunb, all of which belong to the United Arab Emirates. In this respect, Bahrain wishes success to the work of the Tripartite Ministerial Committee formed by the Gulf Cooperation Council to solve the dispute in a manner that would lead to the establishment of good and normal relations with the Islamic Republic of Iran on the basis of the principles of good neighbourliness, mutual respect and observance of mutual interests.

In conjunction with the questions of security and stability, it is imperative that we re-emphasize the danger of territorial claims aimed at changing established, inherited and traditionally accepted boundaries. Bahrain therefore welcomes the resolutions adopted by the summit of the Organization of African Unity (OAU) held in Algeria in July 1999 which confirmed the adherence of member States to the principles set out in the OAU Charter and OAU resolutions in respect of inherited and traditionally accepted boundaries.

During the last three years, the Middle East peace process has encountered a setback which froze and almost completely destroyed the process, owing to the rigid positions and contradictory policies of the previous Israeli Government. Now that a new Government has taken over and has made promises regarding its readiness to revive the peace process, Bahrain, having endorsed that process from the very beginning and having consistently worked towards its success, expresses its hope that the new Israeli Government will translate its promises into full, complete and faithful implementation of all the agreements reached and will be responsive to international efforts to make the peace process a success.

Accordingly, the State of Bahrain has welcomed the latest Palestinian-Israeli agreement on the implementation of the Wye River accords signed at Sharm el-Sheikh as a positive step towards a final settlement between the two parties and the enhancement of the peace process among all other parties.

The Arab side has repeatedly confirmed its commitment to the peace terms reflected in the principles of the 1991 Madrid Conference and the relevant United Nations resolutions. It believes that achievement of a just, comprehensive and lasting peace in the region should be the strategic option that would obligate Israel to recognize legitimate Arab rights, to comply with the relevant resolutions of international legitimacy, including Security Council resolutions 242 (1967) and 338 (1973), to respect the right of the Palestinian people to have their own independent State with Jerusalem as its capital, to fully withdraw from all occupied Arab territories, including the Syrian Arab Golan Heights, to the boundaries that existed on 4 June 1967 and to withdraw from Lebanese territory pursuant to Security Council resolution 425 (1978).

The success of the peace process and the achievement of a just, comprehensive and lasting peace will undoubtedly have a bearing on the future stability and development of all the countries and peoples of the region.

At the same time, we wish to stress the importance of intensifying efforts to make the Middle East, including the Gulf region, a zone free of all weapons of mass destruction, including nuclear weapons.

The world has witnessed this year positive developments in respect of an issue that was a source of deep concern to the international Organization and the international community, namely the question of Lockerbie. We should like here to commend the Libyan Arab Jamahiriya for complying with relevant Security Council resolutions, as well as the other parties in the case for the cooperation they have displayed. We also welcome the suspension by the Security Council of

sanctions against Libya and express our appreciation of efforts exerted by the Governments of the brotherly Kingdom of Saudi Arabia and South Africa and by the Secretary-General, as well as the concerned regional organizations, which have led to agreement on the case. We hope that this will lead to the complete lifting of sanctions.

The easing of the Kosovo crisis by virtue of the return of refugees and displaced persons to their homes and villages has imbued the international community with hope and satisfaction. However, the whole world has seen shocking images of the crimes of ethnic cleansing and the terrorizing of innocent people and of the human suffering that has beset the people of Kosovo, including the displacement of about one million Kosovars, mass graves and the destruction of villages and homes. It is incumbent upon the international community to unfailingly guard against and to address the causes of the phenomenon of racism and all its manifestations.

In view of its keen interest in the maintenance of international peace and security, the State of Bahrain calls upon the United Nations and the international community quickly to intensify their efforts, in cooperation with the competent regional organizations, to settle the ongoing conflicts in various regions and among a number of States. These include the tense situation between Ethiopia and Eritrea and internal strife in Afghanistan, Somalia, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, East Timor and other parts of the world.

Other sources of concern are the phenomena of terrorism, violence, organized crime and related activities such as transnational drug and weapons trafficking that continue to pose a threat to all societies. To address these problems the State of Bahrain supports the call by the Arab Republic of Egypt for the convening of an international conference, under the auspices of the United Nations, with a view to drawing up a comprehensive strategy to combat and eliminate these phenomena.

Since the end of the Second World War, the world economy has experienced tremendous changes on the international trade landscape, including the emergence of giant trade conglomerates and a revolution in the fields of technology, information and communications.

About half a century after the establishment of the International Monetary Fund (IMF), the World Bank and the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT), the international community was able to establish the World Trade Organization (WTO) in order to undertake the responsibility of establishing frameworks for world trade in the forthcoming decades. Now, with the advent of the twenty-first century and the rise of economic globalization, the international community has to set ambitious goals, most notable of which are the eradication of poverty and the pursuit of economic and social development.

Although the positive and constructive position taken recently by the Group of Eight regarding the settlement of the problems of indebtedness has created an atmosphere of confidence and satisfaction, two important points should be stressed. First, the burden of repaying the remaining balances and the servicing of debts should not interrupt the growth and integration of the national economies concerned into the world economy. Secondly, it is essential to create a favourable environment for the promotion of economic and trade cooperation between States on the basis of equality and mutual benefit and within a framework of transparency of capital markets, in addition to facilitating the transfer of technology and encouraging international investment, which would enhance development and growth for all, as well as facilitating the equitable integration of the economies of developing countries into the world economic system. This will enable the world economy to avoid any other shocks that are liable to have a universal impact.

The State of Bahrain is pleased and willing to contribute to international efforts aimed at achieving increased international economic cooperation, due to its stability and strategic location, and the trade and investment environment it enjoys — elements that have helped it attract foreign capital and enhance its standing as an advanced financial and commercial centre.

With the imminent approach of a new century, the world has witnessed major historical changes precipitated by technological and scientific advances, a telecommunications revolution, a rapid flow of information, a trend towards open global markets and a widening scope of interaction between nations, cultures and civilizations. All this serves as a harbinger signalling the advent of a better world for humanity as a whole. Yet, while we appreciate the positive aspects of such advance, we are duty-bound to warn against the dangers that accompany those positive aspects. Those dangers raise the following questions.

To what extent can poor countries benefit from the technological revolution? If they cannot, then the

revolution will serve only to widen the gap between the poor and the rich. To what extent can scientific advance and globalization solve the various environmental problems that endanger the entire world, if such a solution is not linked to solving the problems of development in poor countries, on the one hand, and to curbing and rationalizing consumer and welfare trends in rich countries, on the other? To what extent can globalization of capital flows and markets facilitate the flow of investments into developing countries and boost their export capacities in a manner that would enhance the development of their economies and their contributions to the world economy? To what extent can the potential of such advance and globalization be utilized to help prevent the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, address ethnic conflicts, settle disputes and eliminate the threat of international terrorism? To what extent can this advance and globalization be utilized to enhance opportunities for improving the quality of education, culture and worldwide intercultural knowledge, with a view to upholding the ideals of peace, equality and brotherhood among the entire human race?

With the advent of the third millennium, it behoves us to consider and reflect upon the accomplishments of humanity, on the one hand, and the horrible human suffering that has beset thousands of individuals as a consequence of disputes, conflicts and poverty, on the other. We believe that the United Nations is the principal forum for such reflection and consideration so that solutions can be found for these disputes and conflicts. It is Bahrain's conviction, in this connection, that the international community can enhance its standing and its values during the next millennium and ensure a better destiny for itself, through the achievement of peace, security, solidarity and cooperation within a framework of universal human partnership and pluralism. Bahrain regards these elements as essential for the survival of the planet and calls for strengthening the role of the United Nations system, as it is the trustworthy custodian of our accomplishments and aspirations, so that it can carry out its task to the fullest extent. We are confident that mankind can reach higher levels of advancement, development and growth through coordination and cooperation within the United Nations and other regional organizations. It is our hope that the new millennium will usher in a new era of abundance wherein the world will be endowed with security, peace and stability.

The President: I now give the floor to the Minister for Foreign Affairs and Cooperation of Chad, His Excellency Mr. Mahamat Saleh Annadif.

Mr. Annadif (Chad) (*spoke in French*): On behalf of the Chad delegation, and on my own behalf, I would like to extend warm congratulations to you, Mr. President, on your election to the presidency of the General Assembly at its fifty-fourth session. This is both a tribute to your country, Namibia, for its contribution in defending the ideals of our Organization and a recognition of your considerable ability. The delegation of Chad is firmly convinced that your experience, talents and wisdom will contribute to the success of our deliberations. We assure you of our full support and cooperation in the accomplishment of your noble mission.

I would also like to express our gratitude to your predecessor, Mr. Didier Opertti of Uruguay, who tactfully and adroitly led the work of the fifty-third session.

Allow me also to praise the merits of our Secretary-General, Mr. Kofi Annan, for the foresight, wisdom and, above all, patience with which he is guiding the Organization, as well as for his sustained efforts in seeking international peace and security, despite all kinds of difficulties and the immensity of his tasks.

In a few months we will enter the third millennium, a millennium filled with uncertainties, fears and unknowns, but also one of hope. That millennium will be characterized by globalization and, above all, the domination of human intelligence over nature. It will be an era of communications in which our planet will shrink to a tiny area. It will also mean the disappearance of barriers to the circulation of ideas, knowledge, culture and science. But it will also be an era of competition and complementarity.

During this century, the aspirations of most peoples was to be fed, clothed, cared for, educated, trained, housed and gainfully employed. It is legitimate to hope that with the arrival of the coming century these essential, basic human needs will be met, so that we can avoid a further widening of the gap between wealthy and poor countries.

On the eve of the third millennium, we must acknowledge that the lofty objectives of the United Nations, primarily the maintenance of international peace and security and the reduction of poverty among Member States, are far from being attained, although we have been focusing on them for half a century.

How can we not ask ourselves these kinds of questions at this great annual gathering, where the scope and urgency of political and economic problems are made so clear? It is time to contemplate solutions that include new kinds of relationships, based on solidarity and partnership, that go beyond the traditional relations of cooperation, which have proved their limitations.

Turning more specifically to Chad, our major concern is to create conditions of peace and security through a fully participatory political process that involves the various political parties in the management of public affairs and in the national reconciliation policy for all the people of Chad. The involvement in this approach of all segments of society has enabled our country to restore political stability and civil peace and to establish constitutional and democratic institutions.

We are firmly convinced that a democracy can be effective only when it is based on certain republican concepts, primarily justice, the primacy of human rights and the participation of local communities in the management of their own affairs. The recent establishment of the Supreme Court and the Constitutional Council speak to this major concern, as does that of the National Commission on Human Rights, in operation since 1994. These efforts were acknowledged and led the United Nations Commission on Human Rights last April to end its consideration of the human rights situation in Chad and consequently remove our country from the confidential procedural situation it had been in since March 1991.

Finally, our Government has undertaken a decentralization policy aimed at implementing the choice made by the people of Chad, as reflected in the Constitution of 11 April 1996, through the establishment of decentralized territorial communities and the gradual transfer of authority.

In an effort to consolidate peace and reinforce social cohesion, the Government of Chad has focused on two questions: the army and anti-personnel mines. With respect to the thorny problems relating to the army and security, our Government has undertaken to ensure professional training for demobilized former combatants in order to redeploy them to new jobs, to provide them support in developing income-generating skills and to see to it that their basic needs are met.

With respect to security issues, we have set up a demining programme that should contribute to increasing the safety of the national territory, where approximately a million mines and an indeterminate amount of ammunition of all calibres remain buried, thereby helping to open up Chad, especially the northern part of the country. The presence of these dangerous devices seriously impedes the movement of goods and people and hence the development of the regions concerned.

In this regard, my country has signed and ratified the Ottawa Convention and has set up national structures supervised by the National High Commissioner for Demining in order effectively to combat these lethal devices. The objectives of that programme focus, *inter alia*, on reducing the number of victims, making the main roads safer, promoting economic and social development and facilitating the return of displaced persons.

The implementation of this ambitious demining programme, whose dimensions extend beyond the borders of our country, cannot be done without the assistance of our partners and friends. That is why we wish to appeal once again from this lofty rostrum to the solidarity of Member States of our Organization and to ask them to provide us with assistance and cooperation.

On the eve of the twenty-first century, the welfare of the country's citizens remains the motivating force for governmental action in Chad. That action is based on the ambitious reforms undertaken since 1995 and focuses primarily on a modern and dynamic economy. In point of fact, following devaluation in 1994, Chad rejoined the Bretton Woods institutions and on 23 April 1995 adopted a structural adjustment programme for the medium term with resources provided by the International Monetary Fund in the framework of its Enhanced Structural Adjustment Facility and by the World Bank in terms of structural-adjustment credit, and with financial assistance from our usual partners — France, the European Union and the African Development Bank. Bold reforms have been undertaken that focus primarily on stabilizing public finance, correcting external imbalances and ensuring sustainable growth. To this end we instituted an effective policy to combat poverty.

Our Government has drafted and adopted a new sustainable development programme focusing on three major challenges: economic and financial, social, and political and institutional. The goal is to create a climate of social stability through sustained structural reform and through fiscal, monetary and budgetary policies that will contribute to a macro-economic consolidation and to controlling inflation.

This fight against poverty focuses on four strategic priority elements in the areas of health, education, infrastructure and rural development. In this undertaking we have received support from the international community at the fourth round table on Chad, held in Geneva on 21 and 22 October 1998, where some $1.12 billion was pledged.

In this regard, I wish to express our deepest gratitude to friendly countries and international financial organizations and institutions for their strong response to our appeal for international solidarity. The people of Chad will never forget those commendable efforts. Following that round table, we organized two sectoral meetings, on health and on rural development. Meetings on infrastructure and education will take place in the near future. We reiterate our appeal to all interested parties to participate actively in these meetings, which will be held in N'Djamena in November and December 1999, respectively.

One cannot speak of Chad's economy today without referring to the question of the exploitation of its oil resources. This is a key political, diplomatic and socio-economic issue that has fueled heated discussions both inside and outside the country. In addition to its undeniable economic importance, this project will contribute significantly to subregional integration because it establishes a partnership between two brotherly countries, namely Cameroon and Chad.

In this respect, we have taken into account the development difficulties that Chad is facing, and we are considering our future in terms of petroleum-related issues with a great deal of caution. The Government and the Parliament of Chad have already set up management and distribution mechanisms for the anticipated oil income. For the first time ever in the history of the exploitation of oil deposits, legislation has been enacted to guarantee transparency in the management of oil revenue and also to set aside some of that income for territorial communities in the oil-producing regions and for future generations. The oil activity is an exceptional opportunity, which should contribute to the gradual rebalancing of our budget and give us room for manoeuvre to establish a true policy for development. This project has rightly raised hopes throughout the country.

We are all firmly convinced that new efforts and many sacrifices are required to ensure the gradual implementation of the purposes and principles enshrined in the United Nations Charter as they relate to disputes between a considerable number of Member States as well as to other equally challenging evils that continue to trouble the human conscience. How can we remain indifferent when confronted with the scourges of poverty, illiteracy, foreign aggression, conflict, various pandemics and transnational problems associated with the degradation of the environment and drug trafficking? Unfortunately, these challenges will further increase with globalization, which is now inevitable. Africa is the continent that has been most exposed to those evils, and the growing number of crises is causing our efforts to be spread too thinly and reducing the meagre resources available and dividing our countries.

The interdependence of peace and socio-economic development needs no further proof, especially in Chad, which has experienced the torments of war, its disastrous effects on the population and its repercussions on social and economic life. Out of a sense of duty and international obligation, my country has made and will continue to make enormous sacrifices for other African countries that have fallen victim to the problems inherent in coexistence. That is why we have participated in various peacekeeping operations in the subregion of Central Africa. In this context, I am pleased to recall Operation Turquoise, in which Chad participated to save lives in Rwanda. Chad also contributed to the Inter-African Mission to Monitor the Implementation of the Bangui Agreements and the United Nations Mission in the Central African Republic, which sought a negotiated solution between the Government of the Central African Republic and a part of the rebel army, and which resulted in bringing together different viewpoints opinions and establishing conditions required for the organization of multi-party elections.

In that same spirit, my country intervened in the Democratic Republic of the Congo. Our involvement, together with that of other countries, enabled the situation to be stabilized and promoted dialogue between the warring parties. With the signing of the Syrte accords on 18 April 1999, Chad withdrew its troops from the Democratic Republic of the Congo. The signing of the Lusaka ceasefire agreement by all the parties in conflict has opened up new prospects for that brotherly people. Chad hopes that that agreement, which the Security Council has endorsed, will lead to a definitive peace in that country and the entire Great Lakes region. Chad will support that process.

The tragedy in the Democratic Republic of the Congo has not made us lose sight of the situation in the

Republic of the Congo, which was recently on the verge of breaking up. Now passion seems to be giving way to reason. We welcome the will shown by both the Government of Congo and the opposition parties, who have taken the wise decision to negotiate to restore peace to their country. Chad welcomes and encourages this positive development.

To this rather sombre picture we must add the fragile situation in Angola, where the civil war has resumed throughout the national territory. This is of great concern for all of Africa, particularly since the resumption of hostilities will undoubtedly mean the failure of the considerable efforts made on all sides to bring peace to that country, which has been ravaged by a long war, thus prolonging the suffering of the Angolan people. We appeal to the Security Council to assist in restoring peace to that wounded country.

We welcome the tireless efforts of the Economic Community of West African States to bring peace and security to West Africa. Those efforts have led to the signing of the ceasefire agreements in Sierra Leone and Guinea-Bissau. All the parties involved in those crises should show restraint and work towards reconciliation in the higher interests of their peoples.

With regard to the Horn of Africa, we note that there has been no obvious progress in the willingness of the parties involved in the conflict in Somalia to find a political solution leading to national unity. While we welcome the efforts of Mr. Hosni Mubarak aimed at a negotiated resolution of the crisis, we also appeal to the Somali leaders to assist in restoring peace to their country. We regret the resumption of hostilities between the Ethiopians and Eritreans, which has led to a considerable loss of life and material damage. We urge all those who have mediated between the warring parties to persevere so as to put an end to those hostilities, which have further exacerbated an already disturbing situation.

Closer to home, Chad welcomes the decision of the Security Council to suspend the embargo against the Great Socialist People's Libyan Arab Jamahiriya. We urge that the sanctions be lifted once and for all; they have seriously damaged the interests of the brotherly people of that neighbouring country.

Of all the continents, Africa seems to have suffered the most from the economic crisis and from wars and other conflict situations. But we have not forgotten the major problems that other peoples are facing.

With regard to the situation in the Middle East, it has already been established that the question of Palestine is at the heart of the conflict. Its resolution lies in the implementation of the Oslo accords and, in particular, in full respect by all the parties for United Nations resolutions. The credibility of the Security Council is at stake. With the arrival of a new Israeli Government, there is new hope for the future. Chad encourages all the parties to work together in the same direction.

Elsewhere, the effects of the conflicts between Iraq and Kuwait and between Iraq and Iran persist, hampering the final return to peace. We appeal to the sense of responsibility of the former warring parties to work tirelessly to restore full peace.

In the Balkans, Chad encourages the efforts of the international community to restore peace to the region, and in particular to Kosovo. As for East Timor, we urge all the parties involved to complete the process begun under the auspices of the United Nations so as to end the suffering of the people there.

In Asia, Chad is concerned about the fate of the Republic of China on Taiwan and its 22 million inhabitants. The Republic of China on Taiwan, which plays a major role in world trade, is a peace-loving country that fulfils the obligations in the United Nations Charter, as it has shown on many occasions. Chad supports the admission of the Republic of China on Taiwan to the United Nations as a means of correcting an injustice.

It is well known that a number of conflicts stem from the unbridled arms race. In this regard, the circulation, proliferation of and illicit trafficking in small arms in Africa is of concern to us, particularly since this phenomenon, the result of the end of the cold war and numerous conflicts in the continent, has taken a disturbing turn. If appropriate solutions are not found soon, peace, security and stability in our countries will be constantly threatened.

To address this situation, a conference on small arms and drug trafficking will take place in Chad under the auspices of the United Nations Standing Advisory Committee on Security Questions in Central Africa; it will be followed immediately by the twelfth ministerial meeting of that Committee. Those two important meetings will be held at Ndjamena from 25 to 30 October 1999. Chad is honoured to act as host to the Committee

and will do everything in its power to ensure the success of its work.

The United Nations was founded in a historical context with which we are all familiar. It has been and remains a place for bringing people and ideas closer together, and its very existence has helped avert more than one catastrophe. But the international political and economic environment has changed, and the great rivalry of the cold war has disappeared, giving way to an international system that is still finding itself. We now see an increased desire by Member States to participate in the management of international affairs in addition to the management of their own. United Nations structures must therefore be adapted to the new scope of today's problems, which requires an equal sharing of international responsibilities; these must no longer be the monopoly of a few States, however powerful they may be.

To respond to these concerns, the Security Council must be reformed. Here, Chad wholeheartedly supports the position of the Organization of African Unity that, *inter alia*, there must be equitable and legitimate representation on the Security Council for the African continent.

With respect to the global economy and world trade, appropriate steps must be taken to ensure that the all States will share equally in the benefits of globalization. Globalization of the economy certainly can have the advantage of eliminating all discriminatory and unfair practices in world trade, but it must be recognized that the lack of competitive power of the economies of the countries of the South does not enable them to benefit fully from this. Moreover, the unbridled liberalization of markets and the lack of measures to consolidate certain gains are weakening their economies and marginalizing them in the world arena.

Similarly, the indebtedness of those countries places a heavy burden on their meagre budgetary resources, and wipes out all their development efforts. I welcome the recent decision taken by the Group of Seven at its summit held at Cologne, Germany, to ease the debt of heavily indebted poor countries. Such initiatives are praiseworthy, but they remain insufficient. Chad urges the wealthy countries to make a greater effort to enable poor countries finally to address the external-debt burden, which is a true obstacle to economic and social development.

The President: I call next on the Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Kingdom of Bhutan, His Excellency Mr. Jigmi Yoser Thinley.

Mr. Thinley (Bhutan): Allow me to congratulate you most warmly, Sir, on your assumption of the presidency of the General Assembly at its fifty-fourth session. My delegation is confident that with your vast experience you will steer us through the daunting array of issues before us with great skill. I assure you of the full cooperation and support of my delegation.

May I take this opportunity to express our gratitude to His Excellency Mr. Didier Opertti for his leadership and for his contribution to the work of the fifty-third session of the General Assembly.

My delegation takes great pleasure in welcoming the Republic of Kiribati, the Republic of Nauru and the Kingdom of Tonga as they assume their rightful positions in the comity of nations. It is appropriate that, at this final session of the General Assembly of the twentieth century, the United Nations family has been expanded by yet another three Members. We look forward to the valuable contributions they will make to the Organization, and to working closely with them on issues of mutual concern.

This century has witnessed perhaps the greatest changes in the annals of civilization, from enormous strides in science and technology to advances in social thought and organization. Yet we continue to witness the worst forms of devastation arising from conflict and from the buildup of destructive capacity. The United Nations was born out of the ashes of the Second World War as a reflection of the desire and aspiration of all people to live in peace and harmony. At this, the last session of the General Assembly before the end of the millennium, it is incumbent upon us to consider whether the United Nations has lived up to the high ideals and expectations of all its Members.

The primary objective and responsibility of the United Nations is the maintenance of global peace and harmony on the basis of international law and the sovereign equality of all nations. Even though the United Nations moved swiftly to assume this important responsibility of maintaining peace and security right from its inception, its effectiveness has not been optimal. The end of the cold war raised new hopes and expectations, and renewed efforts to exercise that responsibility. The task has been complex and difficult, and, sometimes, decisive action on some issues has led us to question why there was inaction on others. In our view, the primary mechanism for the maintenance of peace and security must make use of early dialogue

aimed at peaceful resolution of differences. The use of force to resolve conflict must be considered with extreme caution; it must be fully within the context of international law and must enjoy the support of all the members of the international community.

The United Nations Charter entrusts responsibility for the maintenance of international peace and security to the Security Council. While the Council must have the flexibility to act promptly, it, or its individual members, must not operate in isolation. The Council must be responsible to the international community at large and must respond to our collective aspirations for a more representative, relevant and effective Organization.

Bhutan associates itself with the position of the Non-Aligned Movement, which maintains that new global realities must be reflected through reform of the Security Council, in terms of both its composition and its working methods. The legitimacy of an increased role and voice for developing countries must find expression in an increased permanent representation on the Council. We trust that deliberations on this matter will proceed within the established framework of General Assembly mechanisms, with the involvement of all Member States and with continued transparency.

The threat to international peace and security posed by the abundance of weapons of mass destruction as well as conventional arms has not diminished. Progress on nuclear disarmament can take place only if the legitimate security concerns of all countries are addressed and if there is a firm commitment to the eventual elimination of all such weapons. Equal attention, we believe, must be given also to the regulation of global trade in conventional weapons and small arms.

Terrorism continues to jeopardize and undermine human rights, fundamental freedoms and security in a growing number of countries and situations. There is an urgent need to accord greater priority to the elaboration of a comprehensive convention on international terrorism. The global community must enhance cooperation to prevent, combat and eliminate this scourge.

Globalization offers unprecedented opportunities for sustained economic development. Paradoxically, the rapid processes of change and adjustment have been accompanied by intensified poverty, unemployment and social disorientation. Fears that current patterns of market-driven globalization may even give rise to further marginalization of developing countries are not altogether unfounded. All these clearly indicate that there is an acute need for balance in order to forge a middle path for the process of globalization.

My country welcomes the decision taken at the Cologne Summit in June 1999 by the G-8 aimed at alleviating some of the debt burden of the heavily indebted poor countries. We are hopeful that the effective implementation of this decision will go a long way in supporting national efforts to reduce the debt burden of these countries to more serviceable levels and open for them the opportunities for real and sustained economic growth.

While we commend our development partners that have reached or surpassed agreed official development assistance targets, we regret that with a few exceptions, the long-standing commitment to United Nations targets for official development assistance remains largely an unfulfilled goal. In this regard, Bhutan joins other developing countries in underlining the importance of the convening of a high-level conference on the financing of development within the framework of the United Nations. Bhutan recognizes that all parties must exert equal efforts in order to foster a successful development partnership, but it is increasingly concerned by the growing marginalization of least developed countries in global trade, whose share remains below 0.4 per cent. While the least developed countries have taken steps towards economic liberalization and institutional reform, their smooth integration into the global economy must be facilitated through preferential access to markets and assistance for institutional capacity-building and infrastructure development. In this regard, we are heartened by the general sensitivity and responsiveness shown by the World Trade Organization.

As a founding member of the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC) family, Bhutan is committed to further strengthening cooperation in South Asia, where infinitely vast resources and potentials remain locked and unrealized. We have made progress in fostering cooperation, particularly in the social fields, and in strengthening cooperation in the core economic areas. Of special significance is our commitment to establish the necessary mechanisms to enable SAARC to move from a preferential trade arrangement to a free trade arrangement within a reasonable period of time.

One of the overriding responsibilities of the United Nations is in the field of socio-economic development.

Over the decades, the contributions of the various United Nations agencies have been remarkable, although these have sometimes been taken for granted. It is important that we recognize their contributions and provide them with the necessary resources to effectively continue their support to developing countries.

Bhutan has always pursued a people-centred development process. Our national development strategies have always aimed at enhancing gross national happiness rather than merely increasing gross national product. This concept calls not only for economic development in the conventional sense, but for enriching the lives of the people in a holistic way, through the preservation and promotion of our rich cultural heritage, through the protection and conservation of our fragile mountain ecosystem and through the strengthening and exercise of good governance.

In pursuit of an equitable balance between material and spiritual development, the Government has consistently allocated a large share of resources over the last four decades for social services. Almost 30 per cent of the present national budget is allocated to the provision of free basic education and primary health care. To these are attributable a substantial jump in our literacy rate – and the advance in enrolment rate – and an increase in life expectancy for the average Bhutanese by 20 years in two decades.

We have realized that balanced development is not always the easiest route to take. It entails considerable contemplation, a cautious approach and a deliberate choice of a measured path. It requires patience, restraint and; indeed, courage: patience to persevere over many years in order to reap long-term benefits, restraint and self-control to refrain from fleeting compulsions and courage to sacrifice immediate gains in favour of long-term sustainable development.

I would like to seize this opportunity to thank the many worthy members of this Assembly and the various United Nations and other multilateral agencies for their inspiration, cooperation and meaningful support in my country's endeavour to ensure progress and sustained gross national happiness.

The meeting rose at 1 p.m.

United Nations A/54/PV.17

General Assembly
Fifty-fourth session

Official Records

17th plenary meeting
Wednesday, 29 September 1999, 3 p.m.
New York

President: Mr. Gurirab ..... (Namibia)

The meeting was called to order at 3.05 p.m.

Agenda item 9 *(continued)*

General debate

The President: I now call on the Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Foreign Trade of Jamaica, His Excellency The Honourable Seymour Mullings.

Mr. Mullings (Jamaica): On behalf of the delegation of Jamaica I extend to you, Sir, our congratulations on your election to the presidency of the General Assembly at its fifty-fourth session. You and your country, Namibia, are graduates of the United Nations, steeped in its principles, faithful to its causes and committed to its goals. We have full confidence that your leadership will continue to guide us this session in the adoption of constructive decisions which will serve to strengthen the role of the Organization in world affairs.

We express our appreciation to the outgoing President, Mr. Didier Opertti, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Uruguay, for his outstanding work in conducting the business of our last session. We congratulate the Secretary-General for his report (A/54/1) outlining the activities of the Organization over the past year and containing his vision for its future work.

Jamaica welcomes the three States that this year have joined the membership of the United Nations: the Republic of Kiribati, the Republic of Nauru and the Kingdom of Tonga. Their presence will enrich our deliberations as they bring their particular experiences and perspectives to influence the direction and work of the Organization. Their admission coincides with the holding of the special session of the General Assembly on small island developing States which over the last two days addressed the particular vulnerabilities of these States, which merit special attention within the international community.

The three nations we welcome today are also linked to Jamaica through the Commonwealth of Nations. This year the Commonwealth celebrates its fiftieth anniversary, and we salute its achievements in cooperation — especially in promoting the development objectives of its membership — including the recent initiatives to address the special problems of smaller States.

The widening of the gap between rich and poor and the increasing marginalization of a large number of developing countries within the world economic framework are urgent matters demanding the attention of the international community. The reasons for these trends are well-known: superior endowments of natural resources; early advantages in modernizing production processes; high levels of capital accumulation and technological development — all have helped consolidate the dominance of the developed countries in world production and trade. Countries which started later in the day will not find it easy to close the gap.

99-85968 (E)

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And it is not true that the developing countries have only themselves to blame. Most of us have implemented programmes of structural adjustment and stabilization policies, but we have found that the current orthodoxy of free markets and a development model based on liberalization, deregulation and privatization is not providing the promised benefits in trade and investment flows. There is evident need to review the prescriptions and to promote a development policy which takes into greater account the specific socio-economic context of developing countries and to devise more equitable arrangements in international economic relations.

In an interdependent world, the human dimension of the development equation, especially the growing incidence of poverty and all its manifestations, must continue to be a matter of concern to the entire global community. It is therefore essential that we seek to establish a better framework for development cooperation and to implement an agenda for development as a matter of priority within the United Nations system.

Currently, what we are seeing is a withering of interest and diminished commitment on the issue of cooperation for development and a hardening of attitudes in an atmosphere which preaches competitiveness and the survival of the fittest. It is clear to us that special arrangements are needed, not only in relation to special categories of countries, but also in relation to commodities, where serious problems would result from the rigorous application of the dogma of free trade. Regrettably, even where such special arrangements exist they are under threat.

The challenge to the banana regime established within the framework of the Lomé Convention and the ruling of the World Trade Organization (WTO) panel, which has now led to negotiations for an amended regime, sends a message which is particularly discouraging and signals the indifference of some countries to the plight of others. The end result is not yet determined, but at this time the economies of some Caribbean States face a danger not just to their prospects for economic stability and growth, but to their very survival. Many appeals have been made which have gone unheeded. More than anything else, the banana controversy has signified the extent to which the interests of small producers are at the mercy of those in a position of dominance in the world economy and world trade.

Another discouraging trend is the diminished significance and reduced contributions of donor countries in the area of development cooperation. At a time of the increasing incidence of poverty and a looming threat of marginalization, levels of official development assistance have been steadily decreasing at both the bilateral and the multilateral levels. In the case of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), technical assistance has been shrinking, especially over the last five years. In 1994, contributions to UNDP were in the region of $1.1 billion. This has steadily declined to the current level for this year of $718 million.

We have been supporting initiatives for reform in order to promote better coordination and greater efficiency and cost-effectiveness in the delivery of technical assistance in the operational activities of the United Nations. What we have seen, however, is that the reform process seems more directed at generating cost savings and achieving a pooling of resources without increasing the quantum of funding available for development cooperation under the auspices of the United Nations. The process under way is one of contraction of United Nations-related development activities at the country level and a withering-away of the role of the United Nations in an area of critical importance for developing countries. The reduced impact of the United Nations at the country level is already significant and comes at a time when the needs are greater than ever.

We call for a new commitment to development cooperation, a new global partnership between the developed and the developing countries and a new dialogue to review the policies and principles directing international economic relations, and for a new dispensation with regard to policy prescriptions affecting the development process. Without this, developing countries will be engulfed in the perils of globalization with consequences not just for economic welfare, but for the viability of political structures and social stability.

There are also other, more insidious dimensions of globalization, especially those which impinge on the security of States, which we must consider. Within the growing internationalization of markets facilitated by improved technology and policies of liberalization, the spectre of transnational crime has grown to significant proportions, especially in the illicit trade in narcotics and small arms. Together, these instruments of death and destruction represent a significant danger to the internal security of many countries, fostering criminal activities which serve to destabilize and corrupt the social order, to undermine democratic institutions and to increase lawlessness.

We believe that this growing trade in weapons, which promotes organized crime, terrorist activities and drug trafficking, requires the urgent attention of the international community. Jamaica therefore welcomes the arrangements for the holding of the first international conference on small arms, which is to take place in the year 2000. We look forward to this as a good opportunity to develop a programme for implementation by Member States to control the scale and distribution of these weapons.

On reviewing the broader issue of international security, we have to note developments which give rise to concern and anxiety about the future of the world order and the role of the United Nations. The Organization should become engaged wherever international peace is threatened and where conflicts break out. Although the danger of global conflict arising from ideological confrontation has now, in large measure, receded, the world is still full of threats to peace.

Wars continue to be waged at the regional level, primarily as a result of regional rivalries and unresolved territorial disputes. At the national level, ethnic strife and political divisiveness have continued to fuel internal conflict, leading to heavy loss of life and economic disruption and affecting regional stability from the spill-over of refugees to neighbouring States.

We endorse the Secretary-General's strategy of quiet diplomacy and urge him to use his influence wherever possible to forestall the outbreak of conflict and to promote peace and reconciliation between disputing parties. In accordance with the principles of national sovereignty, he will need the cooperation and support of Member States in his efforts for the maintenance of peace, as delicate problems can arise in relation to any process of diplomatic intervention with respect to the role to be undertaken by the United Nations and appropriate regional organizations.

During the past year, events in the Balkans have raised profound questions about the principle of intervention, the use of force, the scale of military enforcement and the role of the Security Council. The debate on these questions has revealed differing perspectives, elements of consensus and varying positions on the applicable principles of international law. In recent times, we have witnessed atrocities committed as a result of the practice of ethnic cleansing as communities rise up against each other to settle old grievances. We all must continue to condemn these practices and understand the need for some kind of action to halt such excesses which violate international humanitarian norms.

However, the principles of international law affecting the sovereignty of States and the use of force should not be brushed aside. We believe in the adoption of an approach which has the confidence of the international community whereby diplomatic and any necessary enforcement action is taken or authorized by the multilateral institutions entrusted with safeguarding international peace and security. The Security Council has the primary responsibility. It should not be ignored and disregarded in favour of unilateral action on the part of any State or group of States.

While the situation in the Balkans has dominated international attention over the past year, more attention should be given to the situation in Africa, where even more serious problems have arisen involving ethnic strife and political turmoil, affecting neighbouring States and creating humanitarian emergencies. As the Secretary-General has observed in his report, too little attention has been given to the conflicts arising in Africa despite the enormous toll in loss of life and in disruption and suffering resulting from armed insurgencies and inter-State conflict. However, we are encouraged by the process taking place in the West African region affecting Liberia and Sierra Leone. We must pay tribute to the work of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), which has shouldered the burden of peace-building in these two States so battered by civil conflict.

We also note with appreciation the efforts of the Organization of African Unity (OAU) in regard to the situation in the Great Lakes region and hope that the Lusaka Agreement will form the basis for reconciliation and peace. The situation in Angola remains a tragic one for the country, and the international community should remain united in support of measures taken against the UNITA insurgency and to bring an end to the nightmare which has for so long impeded the progress of that country.

We are distressed by the continuing problems in the Horn of Africa. We continue to support regional efforts towards peacemaking between Ethiopia and Eritrea and welcome the OAU framework agreement which has been worked out to assist the parties to reach a settlement. We urge the Secretary-General to continue to maintain close contact with the parties in all the areas of tension, with the aim of promoting peace and stability, and to foster a spirit of reconciliation so that African States may be able to concentrate their efforts in confronting the critical challenges of economic and social development.

In the Middle East, while the situation still remains troublesome, there are some signs of renewed hope with the revival of the peace process and the emergence of a more positive climate for making progress towards a settlement. We welcome the signing of the Sharm el-Sheikh Memorandum earlier this month and urge the parties to move towards accommodation, to seek to realize the legitimate rights of all parties as the basis for a just and durable peace. The challenge is formidable and the solution will require statesmanship and courage.

In South-East Asia the outbreak of violence in East Timor is a matter which has caused deep concern. As there is an obvious need for ensuring the safety of the inhabitants of the territory, we fully support the deployment of the international force which is now in the territory to maintain order. It is necessary now to contemplate the next step, which will be to devise arrangements for the political future of the territory.

In our area of Latin America and the Caribbean there remain a number of unresolved territorial disputes but our expectation is that States in our region will use available mechanisms to resolve such disputes by peaceful means. In the Caribbean our efforts are directed towards developing greater integration both within the Caribbean Community and within the wider ambit of the Association of Caribbean States, ACS. This is part of our regional effort towards establishing a regime of peace and cooperation in the Caribbean Sea. In this regard, I should express our ongoing concern over the remaining remnants of cold war politics in our region. The continuation of the embargo against Cuba is a source of tension and carries the risk of conflict, which is particularly troubling for neighbouring States. In the spirit of the friendly relations we enjoy with Cuba and the United States, we call for dialogue, the normalization of relations and an end to policies of confrontation and exclusion.

Small countries have an important interest in ensuring that peace and stability is a permanent feature of the world order. In the absence of military power we depend on diplomacy and on the United Nations and its machinery and international adherence to its principles to safeguard and protect those who are militarily weak. It is in our interest to seek to strengthen and uphold all the multilateral institutions dedicated to this effort. The Security Council, which has such an important role in this structure, should be given the fullest support in meeting its responsibilities. This is best achieved through the democratic participation of the United Nations membership in the work of the Council, which serves to strengthen its effectiveness and to give it greater credibility within the international system.

Jamaica supports that process and aspires for membership of the Council for a two-year period beginning next year. We do so out of a motivation to make our contribution as a small State in the management of international peace and security. We are driven by a strong commitment to multilateralism and to upholding the principles of the Charter and by a determination to exercise a careful and balanced judgement in relation to all issues affecting peace and security which may come before us. It will be our goal to assist the Security Council to work effectively and to act decisively. We will seek to involve the broader membership in its consultations and to influence the discharge of the Council's responsibilities with fairness and with full respect for the legitimate interests of all parties, within the broader interest of international peace and security.

The work of the United Nations in the area of humanitarian relief has always been an important part of its operations, and this is the area in which its work has had the most direct impact and practical meaning at the level of the people. This is particularly so in the delivery of emergency relief in natural disasters. The increase in the scale and intensity of earthquakes, hurricanes, floods and famine in recent times has increased the demands on the system, and there is an obvious need to maintain capability and readiness in the relevant agencies. At the same time, we should support the various initiatives for disaster prevention, including the enforcement of stricter building codes, improved drainage systems, the exchange of scientific knowledge, increased monitoring and the use of early-warning systems to protect ourselves and mitigate the damage.

Much more can be done to avert disasters in those areas where members have greater control and power. Man-made disasters create a tragic problem of refugees, which otherwise is often the result of war, persecution or political turmoil. The tragic plight of refugees uprooted from their homes and forced to flee is a sad and disturbing picture, and even more so for the neighbouring States, which are often poor countries that do not have the means to handle heavy inflows.

As we have seen from the Secretary-General's report, one of the distressing practices in recent conflicts has been the deliberate targeting of civilians and humanitarian workers. This unacceptable flouting of humanitarian norms is a matter of serious concern for us and indicates the need for further elaboration of principles of international humanitarian law applicable in time of war.

Our review of the state of the world in the economic, political and humanitarian dimensions suggests the need for greater effort in building political commitment and investing resources for achieving common goals. Too many of the old problems remain unresolved, and our unity of purpose is too often compromised by political differences and considerations of narrow economic interests. At a time of increasing globalization, the reality of interdependence should be leading us in the other direction — towards mutual respect, tolerance, understanding and partnership in a world of diversity, for these are the true foundations of multilateralism.

As we close this century and approach the new millennium, we should do so in the hope of reaching greater achievements by acting in concert to uphold our ideals of humanity and to fight the common enemies of mankind: war, poverty, human suffering and injustice. This should be our firm resolve.

The President: I now call on the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Poland, His Excellency Mr. Bronislav Geremek.

Mr. Geremek (Poland): Please accept my congratulations, Sir, on your election to the presidency of the General Assembly at its current session. We are indeed glad to have a distinguished statesman from Africa presiding over important deliberations on global security and development. I am sure that your personal attributes, as well as your diplomatic skills, will ensure the success that is expected from the Assembly. The delegation of Poland will do its best to assist you in your important functions. My compliments go also to the President of the General Assembly at its fifty-third session, Mr. Didier Opertti of Uruguay, for the outstanding commitment he demonstrated during his presidency.

It is with satisfaction that we welcome in our midst the new Members of the United Nations: the Republic of Kiribati, the Republic of Nauru and the Kingdom of Tonga.

It was with the utmost attention that we listened to the Secretary-General's introduction of his report on the work of the Organization. His interesting and highly stimulating ideas will guide us throughout the whole fifty-fourth session of the General Assembly. May I assure the Secretary-General of our deep respect and support for all his endeavours.

In my statement today, I wish to focus on the three issues which, in my view, are at the centre of discussions within this Organization. These are, first, human freedoms, and in particular the question of rethinking the principle of national sovereignty and non-interference; secondly, current challenges to the United Nations Charter-based system of international security; and thirdly, coping with contradictions of globalization through better international cooperation.

We have recently been witnessing new, painful manifestations of ethnic hatred in Kosovo. Armed clashes have again shaken the north Caucasus. East Timor is another example of intolerance and the folly of violence. We pay homage to the victims of this violence. But the people in all the crisis-stricken areas expect more from us than just words of sympathy.

We should pose ourselves some questions: could these new outbursts of conflict have been prevented? Is there a political will to head them off in the future? If the answer is positive, then what should be done to translate our political commitment into action in a concerted and effective way? How should the system of international relations be improved to give people the hope that they will not be left defenceless in the face of genocide and persecution?

The United Nations Charter-based system of international security was born of the lessons of a devastating world war which started with blatant violations of sovereignty of States. To address this reality, the system of international law and institutions was rightly geared to give those nations a sense of security and to prevent inter-State conflict. Most of today's conflicts, however, are of an intra-State nature. They stem from human rights abuses, social tensions or the collapse of State structures. Can we tackle the new challenges with existing concepts and notions only?

We have come to understand that absolute sovereignty and total non-interference are no longer tenable. There is not, and there cannot be, a sovereign right to ethnic cleansing and genocide. We have learned that what should not be repeated is the unacceptable inaction which occurred in the past, such as in the Rwandan crisis. Rwanda demonstrates what Kosovo might have become had we not intervened in 1999. Kosovo demonstrates what Rwanda might have been had we intervened in 1994. The burden of responsibility is enormous, the lesson clear.

At the same time, we should follow the principle that our responsibility is the same for all ethnic groups. In Kosovo the ethnic cleansing of Albanians by Serbs has been stopped and reversed, but now we witness that the presence of Serbs and Roma in Kosovo is under threat.

In this decade the international community has through its actions — recently in Kosovo and in East Timor — recognized the universal political and moral imperative to act in order to stop gross and systematic violations of human rights.

This recognition, setting aside the distinction between inter- and intra-State conflicts, reflects the spirit of the Charter of the United Nations.

Indeed, the central figure of the system of the United Nations must be the human being — his or her right to a peaceful life, to personal freedom, to a decent existence and dignity. When human life and freedoms are assailed and individual rights brutally violated, then we must not remain indifferent and unconcerned: we cannot stand idle.

The imperative to act raises the question of the right to act. We have recognized that the walls of sovereignty cannot be used to conceal and legitimize the abuse of human rights and fundamental freedoms. Sovereignty cannot mean impunity for genocide and human rights abuses.

Let us all remember that it remains one of the fundamental objectives of the United Nations

> "to reaffirm faith in fundamental human rights, in the dignity and worth of the human person, in the equal rights of men and women and of nations large and small".

The primacy of the human person and human rights, however, has to be adequately reflected in the application of international law. This is not an easy task, first, because there are still too many cases where behind hypocritical lip-service to human rights there exist practices of curbing and limiting those rights for the sake of preserving political power; secondly, because the legal framework of intervention, which should ensure the possibility of quick and effective action, is too often distorted by selective and subjective interpretations.

On the one hand, the banner of humanitarian intervention should not be used as a pretext for imposing political control and domination from the outside. We want to make the walls of sovereignty surmountable, but not for all purposes. On the other hand, the principle of humanitarian intervention has to be fairly and consistently applied to avoid double standards.

The development of international law should thus uphold the basic truth that a sustainable, lasting and secure order in international relations can be built only on the freedom of the human being.

The principle of solidarity in international relations should grow in importance, since it also provides the key to the effectiveness of the mission of the United Nations.

Acting for universal observance of human rights while preserving the necessary content of the notion of sovereignty raises the question of the best strategies for humanitarian intervention. We have but to agree that intervention by force is an instrument of last resort. What is preferable is an early and cooperative engagement to correct the practices that give rise to concern. There is no doubt that armed intervention is a sign of the failure of cooperative methods.

We support wholeheartedly the efforts to foster a new culture of prevention. The basis for this philosophy should be the universal recognition that international commitments undertaken by States in the field of human rights are matters of direct and legitimate concern to other States as well, before their abuse degenerates into a threat to international peace and security. Human rights do not belong exclusively to the internal affairs of States.

The present session of the General Assembly will lead us into the year 2000. Let this symbolic date inspire us to reflect upon the mission of the United Nations, to make the millennium summit a truly meaningful event. On the eve of the next millennium, the world still needs the United Nations, while the United Nations needs a new vision. Faced with new and more demanding challenges, we are of the opinion that the solutions to them require joint and concerted actions by the whole community of States. The United Nations needs a reinforced commitment by its Member States to the purposes and principles enshrined in the Charter.

Let us try to find new strength for the Organization by reaching back to the intellectual and normative origins of the United Nations. Contrary to some assertions, we believe that the Charter is not outdated in its basic message. What it needs is a new, fresh and visionary

reading in the context of new international realities and challenges. For example, with respect to Chapter VIII of the Charter, we note that many of today's conflicts are local in nature. It is for this reason that the relationship between the United Nations and regional security needs to be further explored.

Those actors who are closer to events and have a larger stake in regional stability might be the ones who would be willing to react more promptly and with greater determination. This is why Poland supports increased responsibility of regional organizations for conflict prevention and crisis management. In regions where such organizations exist and have the necessary potential, they should be involved more actively in solving substantial problems. One possible example of how to use them constructively is the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe.

Thus, the key to effective use of the principle of subsidiarity is closer political and operational cooperation between the Security Council and regional organizations.

A debate on United Nations reform has been going on for a number of years. The fiftieth anniversary of the Organization stimulated the discussion, which resulted in a universal understanding of the need for changes. Many of those changes have already been implemented, thanks to the tireless efforts of the Secretary-General. This process should, however, be deepened and accelerated. The Security Council offers a case in point.

The Security Council, upon which primary responsibility has been conferred for the maintenance of international peace and security, occasionally finds it difficult to act in situations of inter-State or local armed conflicts, even when those situations have a dangerous spillover potential. Whether for reasons of broad ideological motivations or narrow national interests, members can block vitally needed decisions, and adversely affect the security of certain regions. How are we to eliminate situations in which the Security Council is prevented from taking up its responsibilities? How are we to increase the effectiveness of the Security Council, combining effectiveness with enhanced representativeness? Reform of the Security Council is long overdue: let us undertake a decisive effort to make it a reality. Let us think anew of how to strengthen the authority of the Council and preclude the possibility that its decisions will be ignored or misimplemented by individual States.

(spoke in French)

A few weeks ago, two young Africans froze to death on their flight between Conakry and Brussels. They had stowed away in the landing gear of the aircraft. They left behind a moving appeal addressed to the people and politicians in charge in Europe that has already been quoted in this Hall. In view of the special nature of that appeal, I should once again like to quote from it. They wrote:

> "Help us. ... We are suffering enormously in Africa. ... We have war, disease and we lack food. ... We wish to be educated and we ask you to help us so that we can study and be, in Africa, just the same as you are".

There is no more eloquent appeal to people's hearts and consciences than those words of despair written by children.

We must find the right solutions to the social and economic failures, to the threats and to the lack of prospects that people and societies face and consider the urgent need to change the present framework of international cooperation. Frustration and the lack of social action cause conflict and a lack of stability. We must think about how to integrate our social and economic programmes with the general imperative of the new culture of prevention.

Poland is prepared to participate in these efforts, the aim of which is to build a world based on these principles. However, our resources are limited. Our country is only just emerging from a period of major economic crisis caused by the communist system and its centralized planning, with its waste and bad management. Even so, we are now creating a complex and effective system of cooperation for development that will demonstrate our commitment in poverty eradication activities. At the same time, we are prepared to share with other countries the development experience we ourselves have acquired during the process of reform of our political and economic systems over the last 10 years of transformation.

Globalization must become a process with a human face. Certain basic principles must be better integrated into the development machinery: specifically, solidarity; combating marginalization; responsibility; and equal opportunity. Combating marginalization: that of the least developed countries, which do not yet enjoy the benefits

of globalization. Responsibility: that of Governments in implementing policies of good governance, in respecting human rights and in being aware that the well-being of all people everywhere is just as important as the well-being of their own nations. Equal opportunity: for the poorest, and those who are still sidelined by society. And solidarity: in facing our common challenges — terrorism, organized crime, environmental threats, natural disasters, AIDS — together.

Unfortunately, we still have much left to do before we attain these goals. The 1999 United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) *Human Development Report* provides fresh, shocking evidence of social breakdown and threats to human security. The challenges I have just mentioned are just part of a more universal question: how can we respond to the new realities of the world? Global policies have not been fully adapted to cover the increasing number of complicated and contradictory phenomena that cannot be tackled with traditional diplomatic instruments. The process of designing policies is still basically the job of individual nations, whereas the challenges we are facing require creative cooperation at the global level. It is for this reason that, Governments must further integrate the idea of international cooperation into their national policies, while avoiding the temptation of authoritarianism. This, however, highlights the urgent need to revise and strengthen our institutional arrangements regarding the design of global policy, particularly with regard to the most complex problems of trade, finance and the environment.

International cooperation must be more open to other actors in civil society by reflecting the rich network of relationships. While several countries are re-evaluating their national policies, democratizing their societies, privatizing their national economies and decentralizing economic and political power, at the international level we are, broadly speaking, still confining ourselves to conventional intergovernmental actions. The United Nations must promote active international cooperation whereby governments and the various sectors of civil society act together towards common goals.

In this connection, we welcome the "Partners for Development" initiative of the Secretary-General of the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD). By breaking from normal practice, this will allow more active participation by the public and private sectors and by representatives of government and the business and intellectual worlds in resolving various complex development problems.

(spoke in English)

As someone who has witnessed the atrocities but also the tremendous progress that the twentieth century has brought us, I look towards the coming century with much optimism. This optimism is justified first and foremost by the liberation of nations and peoples, the wave of democratization, the market reforms all over the world and the universal understanding of human rights ideals. Fewer people live in constant fear of arbitrary arrest, torture or worse. I also look towards the coming century with hope because I see the predominant will to consolidate those recent achievements.

Address by Mr. Malam Bacai Sanha, President of the Republic of Guinea-Bissau

The President: The Assembly will now hear an address by the President of the Republic of Guinea-Bissau.

Mr. Malam Bacai Sanha, President of the Republic of Guinea-Bissau, was escorted into the General Assembly Hall.

The President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I have the honour to welcome to the United Nations the President of the Republic of Guinea-Bissau, His Excellency Mr. Malam Bacai Sanha, and to invite him to address the Assembly.

President Sanha (*spoke in Portuguese; French text furnished by the delegation*): Guinea-Bissau is gratified, Sir, at your assumption of the presidency of the fifty-fourth session of the General Assembly. The unanimous election of a distinguished African diplomat such as yourself to this post is evidence of the conviction of the Member States of the Organization that, under your clear-sighted leadership, our work is certain to be successful. Your election is also a concrete expression of Secretary-General Kofi Annan's dedication to the cause of peace, as well as a recognition of Namibia's significant contribution to international peace-building. We pay tribute also to your predecessor, Mr. Didier Opertti, for the great sensitivity and skill he displayed in fulfilling his duties during the fifty-third session.

We would like also to express, on behalf of the people of Guinea-Bissau and on my own behalf, our gratitude to the Secretary-General, Mr. Kofi Annan, for his efforts towards international peace and security.

Guinea-Bissau also welcomes the new States Members of the United Nations — Kiribati, Nauru and Tonga — with which we intend to maintain relations of friendship and cooperation.

On the eve of the new millennium, Africa is experiencing an increase in armed conflict that threatens regional peace and stability. Regrettably, West Africa has not been spared this scourge. From the Liberian crisis to that of Sierra Leone, not to mention Guinea-Bissau, our region has been racked by periods of fratricidal violence whose causes are manifold.

In the case of our country, the root causes of the political and military crisis include a lack of effectiveness and a loss of authority on the part of the State; poor management; human rights violations; non-compliance with the principle of the separation of power between sovereign bodies; corruption and deteriorating living conditions; and total frustration and despair on the part of those who fought for freedom and their homeland.

The events of 7 June 1998 were a direct result of these problems. Unfortunately, as is the case in every conflict, the crisis also resulted in a tragic situation for the population that included the loss of life, a massive flow of refugees to neighbouring countries and large numbers of displaced persons, not to mention the devastation of the economic and social infrastructure of the country.

Having experienced the horrors of war, the people of Guinea-Bissau today more than ever strongly aspire to live in peace and security, with hope for the future and in the full enjoyment of their fundamental rights. Guinea-Bissau also wishes to consolidate its unity and to promote a culture of peace and national reconciliation that is based on a pluralist democracy with sound governance and on the rule of law.

We are determined to promote and protect the dignity of human beings and to enable their harmonious development. In this regard, we are pleased to note that a conference was convened recently in Guinea-Bissau for the reconciliation and unity of the people of our country. That event of rare scope raised the awareness of our fellow citizens and mobilized them with respect to national peace and reconciliation, which is a prerequisite for domestic security and socio-economic progress.

The conference also received direct support from, among others, Sweden, the Netherlands and the representative of the United Nations Secretary-General. All of Guinea-Bissau's vital elements participated, including political parties, non-governmental organizations, the Government, the military junta and our nationals living abroad.

We take this opportunity to affirm that we will spare no effort in working to consolidate the emerging democracy in Guinea-Bissau, basing ourselves on the social and cultural values of our people and on the principles of good relations as set out in the Charter of the United Nations and that of the Organization of African Unity, in order to bring about a lasting peace in our country.

In this context, we will be holding legislative and presidential elections on 28 November, preceded by a census and the registration of electoral candidates. We would like to reaffirm before the Assembly our determination to hold the elections as scheduled, despite the slow response time of some of our partners in development with respect to the commitments entered into at the round table held in Geneva on 4 and 5 May.

We would like also express our heartfelt thanks to Sweden, Portugal and the Netherlands for fulfilling their commitments in a timely manner.

We take this opportunity to launch an urgent appeal to the international community to support Guinea-Bissau in its efforts to return to constitutional order, which is a prerequisite for restoring normal relations of cooperation with its development partners.

It is also important to underscore our very positive relations with the peoples of the subregion, in particular with Senegal, and our desire to renew our fraternal ties of cooperation with the Republic of Guinea in order to help consolidate peace and stability in the subregion.

Despite the progress we have made in the struggle for human dignity and freedom, the vast majority of humankind lives in degrading conditions that are unacceptable to the collective conscience. This situation is the result of selfish interests that go against the moral and political values of the United Nations. The example of East Timor is a case in point.

With regard to East Timor, we are deeply concerned by the fact that after the popular consultation, whose outcome was favourable to the Maubere people, we witnessed very violent acts which were completely at odds with the agreement of 5 May between Indonesia,

Portugal and the United Nations. We express our fraternal solidarity with the heroic people of East Timor in the face of the genocide carried out by Indonesian militias. We condemn those acts and demand respect for the desire for self-determination expressed in the popular consultation of 30 August last. We welcome the strong — albeit late — reaction of the international community aimed at restoring peace and security in that territory. We appeal for efforts to be intensified and call for technical, material and financial aid for the rebuilding of East Timor, which has been brutally destroyed.

Guinea-Bissau supports the international community, the United Nations and the Organization of African Unity in their ceaseless search for a peaceful solution to the problems affecting our continent. In this context, the situation in Angola is of great concern for our country. The civil war has imposed great suffering on the majority of the population of Angola, especially those in the most vulnerable sectors. This situation requires vigorous action on the part of the international community to restore lasting peace in that neighbouring country. Guinea-Bissau demands that UNITA unconditionally abide by the Lusaka Protocol so as to put an end to this long and painful conflict in that fraternal country.

In the Middle East, the peace process between Israel and Palestine deserves our utmost attention. In this regard, we note with satisfaction the positive development in relations between Israel and Palestine under the impetus provided by the President of the Palestinian Authority, Yasser Arafat, and the Israeli Prime Minister, Ehud Barak.

In Latin America, we hope that the economic and trade embargo against Cuba will soon be lifted. We believe that the realism of the international community must prevail so as to spare the Cuban people the suffering that they continue to endure.

While it is true that peace and security are an indispensable condition for social and economic development, it is no less true that improving people's living conditions is one of the foundations of social and political stability. However, one of the obstacles to pursuing those objectives is our country's external debt. That is why the external debt burden is a matter of constant concern for Guinea-Bissau. In this context, we welcome the Heavily Indebted Poor Countries (HIPC) Debt Initiative. We also welcome the decisions taken at the G-7 summit recently held in Cologne.

We take this opportunity to pay a warm tribute to all the organizations in the United Nations system working in our country for their substantial contribution not only to consolidating national peace and reconciliation but to alleviating the suffering of our people. We also welcome the decision to appoint Mr. Samuel Nana-Sinkam as Special Representative of the Secretary-General to head the United Nations Peace-building Support Office in Guinea-Bissau, whose activities are greatly appreciated by our people.

We believe that we have made sufficiently clear our determination to hold elections on the scheduled date, 28 November 1999. However, we know that democracy does not end with elections. Support for the special emergency programme for Guinea-Bissau is therefore absolutely necessary in order to ensure that the democratic gains are irreversible and to give sustained development in our country a chance. That is why we take this opportunity to appeal once more to the international community not only to take an interest in the elections but also to support the determined efforts of Guinea-Bissau to build its future.

The President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I thank the President of the Republic of Guinea-Bissau for the statement he has just made.

Mr. Malam Bacai Sanha, President of the Republic of Guinea-Bissau, was escorted from the General Assembly Hall.

Agenda item 9 *(continued)*

General debate

The President: I now give the floor to the Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade of New Zealand, His Excellency The Right Honourable Donald McKinnon.

Mr. McKinnon (New Zealand): First let me congratulate you, Sir, the Foreign Minister of Namibia, on your election as President of the General Assembly this session. I certainly recall my meetings with you and your President in your country last year.

I also wish to welcome three new Members to the United Nations — Kiribati, Nauru and Tonga — all very close friends and neighbours of New Zealand. I trust that the faith they have shown in the United Nations will be fulfilled in the years ahead, and we certainly look forward to working closely with them.

When addressing this Assembly, especially as a representative of a smaller Member State, one is reminded that the United Nations must remain the fundamental point of reference in international relations. Indeed, that is a truth that all Member States have an obligation to acknowledge. Furthermore, it is of course sound policy for all who need and rely on the rule of international law in place of lawlessness. And it is particularly important to restate it at this time. The United Nations collective security framework, which is one of the fundamental elements of the Charter together with cooperation on economic and social problems and promoting respect for human rights, has perhaps never been more severely tested than in this last year of the twentieth century.

Armed conflicts, many of them internal and ethnically based, have continued to present a serious moral challenge to the international community, and they are likely to do so for the foreseeable future. The Security Council's response to these problems does not always increase our confidence in the Organization.

The Secretary-General's remarks in his statement at the beginning of this debate about the need to reconcile universal legitimacy with effectiveness in defence of human rights were most timely. New Zealanders place a very good deal of faith in the United Nations: when we see on our television screens evidence of violence and inhumanity against the vulnerable, and we are told that the Security Council cannot reach an agreement on collective action, we are left worried, and wondering whether our trust in the Security Council is well placed. A Council which loses the trust of the people is a Council which will become irrelevant.

I want to talk to the Assembly about two extremely serious challenges the Council faced this year: Kosovo and East Timor. Both highlight the importance of the actions of the Security Council.

In East Timor, following President Habibie's courageous offer to the East Timorese people, prompt and effective action was taken by the Security Council to set in train the popular consultation process. The ballot — undertaken in extremely difficult circumstances by highly committed United Nations workers, international and local, all of whom deserve acclaim — produced a resounding and incontrovertible expression of the will of the East Timorese people. This was the essential basis for the international community's response since the ballot.

Post-ballot events were appallingly tragic and have rightly provoked a strong reaction around the world. The dispatch to Jakarta and Dili of the Security Council mission led by Ambassador Andjaba of Namibia was a key step in addressing this grievous situation. The efforts made by representatives of all countries present at the time of the meeting of Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation Council leaders in Auckland, joined by the British Foreign Secretary representing the European Union, reinforced the Secretary-General's urging that Indonesia accept the offer of international help. The assistance could not have come too early.

New Zealand is proud to be a contributor, alongside the forces of other nations from the region and from further afield, and under the leadership of Australia, to the United-Nations-authorized multinational force that is now operating in East Timor. Our soldiers from New Zealand are on the ground in East Timor right now. We are prepared also to take part in the United Nations peacekeeping operation foreshadowed in Security Council resolution 1264 (1999), and we urge the Council to take prompt action -- next week would not be too soon -- to establish this operation, which would be part of the United Nations transitional administration in East Timor. We are contributing to the efforts of humanitarian agencies to provide support to the hundreds of thousands of ordinary people who have been displaced in East Timor; those currently in West Timor should be speedily repatriated. New Zealand has added its voice to those who believe that the people responsible for crimes against humanity in East Timor should be brought to account. The overriding objective must now be to ensure the realization of the 30 August ballot outcome and East Timor's transition to independence. It is clear that in laying the basis for East Timor's future, the United Nations will be the indispensable organization.

It is inevitable that comparison will be made between East Timor and Kosovo. In Kosovo the world saw a grave humanitarian crisis with the Security Council unable to act. In New Zealand's view, collective action to try to put a stop to a humanitarian disaster involving genocide and the most serious crimes against humanity should never be held hostage to the veto. When it is, the Security Council loses its credibility and its relevance. I need hardly reiterate New Zealand's continuing opposition to the veto, voiced since San Francisco in 1945. While it is understandable that national interests will influence how members vote in the Security Council, we have never accepted that some narrow interests of any

one of five countries should be able to override the will of a clear majority of members.

The adoption by the Security Council of its resolution 1244 (1999) of 10 June, which provided the international community's endorsement of a political solution to the Kosovo conflict, was certainly greeted with much relief in most quarters, including in New Zealand. The resolution was proof, if any were needed, that the United Nations remains, as in East Timor, the indispensable organization. And as the Secretary-General observed at the time, it also gave strong legal underpinning to the task ahead, a task which, he noted, is daunting. The contribution of the dedicated United Nations and specialized agency staff who are now working with little fanfare in Kosovo certainly deserves our recognition.

Both Kosovo and East Timor have put the Security Council to the test. In their own ways they have challenged this Organization's capacity to take effective action in the face of severe difficulties. The world must never again witness horrors such as those in Kosovo whilst the Security Council remains impotent. The case of East Timor shows that the Security Council can react swiftly and effectively when the will exists. For this to be possible, the fullest commitment to support those humanitarian ideals that are the basis of the United Nations Charter remains essential.

The adoption of the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court shows such a commitment. The international community must now deliver on its promise, with signature and early ratification of that Statute.

As we know, the United Nations also has before it the pressing demands of the various and sometimes interrelated conflicts throughout Africa with, of course, their appalling humanitarian consequences. Who can put out of their minds the images of atrocities we have seen from Sierra Leone, for instance? Yet the Council's response has until very recently been low-level. Once again, the credibility of the Security Council depends in large part on its being seen as even-handed in its attention to crises, wherever they may occur, and whether the Cable News Network (CNN) is there or not.

For much of the past year we have seen the Council virtually paralysed on the important question of disarmaming Iraq of its weapons of mass destruction. In the meantime, this potentially very serious threat to the security of the region remains unresolved. The reason again has been the very sharp divisions among the permanent members, which by virtue of the veto power can block any action. This situation remains unacceptable.

New Zealand's awareness of the importance of the role of collective action has also been heightened by recent events in our own immediate region. Here, the United Nations demonstrated its ability to respond to the different demands of supporting the regionally inspired peace process on the island of Bougainville, part of Papua New Guinea, and of assessing the needs created by disruptions to the population on Guadalcanal in the Solomon Islands.

The United Nations must be capable of responding effectively. Small and vulnerable nations in particular need confidence in the United Nations, as it may be their only hope in times of trouble. I am very concerned therefore by the apparent trend away from financing new peacekeeping operations by means of assessed contributions and an increasing reliance instead on voluntary funding. This, of course, poses a threat to the collective responsibility that is at the heart of this Organization. In practical terms it is likely to mean that those regions which fail to attract donor support will not receive the response they are entitled to as Members of the United Nations. This trend must be urgently reversed; all operations must be put on an equal financial footing by means of assessed contributions.

In addition, as I noted here last year, the largest contributor's arrears to the peacekeeping and regular budgets continue to cast a long shadow over the Organization. Outstanding dues and very slow payments to troop contributors affect us all, and can severely constrain the ability of countries to contribute to pressing peacekeeping needs. We call again on those Member States who are in dereliction of their obligations to make payment on time, in full and, of course, without conditions.

Reform of the Security Council remains one of the most important items on our agenda. Further useful progress has been made this year. While the issue of enlargement continues to be complex, we believe there has existed for some time wide agreement on the equally important areas of reforming the Council's working methods and the curtailing of the veto. The linkage between the veto and enlargement was also explicitly recognized in this year's report to the General Assembly of the Open-ended Working Group on the Question of Equitable Representation on and Increase in the

Membership of the Security Council and Other Matters Related to the Security Council.

As for the task of providing more equitable representation, I am not convinced that we will be able to achieve this while the regional groups in the United Nations continue to reflect the political geography of the 1960s. Quite different and far more sensible arrangements have been adopted in other multilateral forums, as, for example, in the context of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT). The present system here in New York locks in very great disparities in representation. Small countries that can make an excellent contribution are often severely disadvantaged, especially where a political bloc inside a regional group may coordinate closely on electoral matters.

I would, therefore, wish to add my voice to those of the Prime Ministers of Fiji and Samoa and the Foreign Ministers of Papua New Guinea and Australia, who spoke earlier in this debate on the need for reconfiguration. Reconfiguration of the regional groups may well hold one of the keys to an overall package on Security Council reform.

New Zealand still looks forward to the day when we can join a regional group here in New York which includes our Asia-Pacific neighbours. In the meantime, we will continue to build linkages in our region and developing the many areas of our common understanding.

One of the great strengths of the General Assembly is the equal status ascribed to each Member. All Members, large or small, rich or poor, have a right to be heard here. Each has a single vote. While we must all from time to time temper our own national ambitions in the interests of reaching a common understanding, we respect the point of view of each individual member. The special session on small island developing States over the last few days was a very good opportunity to do just that. New Zealand is firmly committed to assisting the small island developing States SIDS in the spirit of common purpose and partnership envisaged at Barbados five years ago. We are very pleased that all participants in the special session have reaffirmed their commitment to implement fully the Barbados Programme of Action.

In April New Zealand, represented by my colleague, the Honourable Simon Upton, had the privilege of chairing the seventh session of the Commission on Sustainable Development. We were pleased to be able to help reinvigorate debate and build consensus around the need for a more coordinated approach to stewardship of the world's oceans and the need to recognise, in an ongoing way, the special characteristics and needs of small island developing States.

The Commission faces the great challenge of pursuing the implementation of Agenda 21. Two other great challenges we as a world face on the environmental front are the threat of global climate change, caused at least in part by human-induced emissions of greenhouse gases, and the need to maintain an approach to international trade and environmental issues which is based on sound scientific analysis and agreed rules and procedures. It is vitally important that we should continue to act in concert to face these international challenges.

International cooperation in addressing economic, social and humanitarian problems is, and always will be, one of the cornerstones of the United Nations Charter. The substantial decline in official development assistance flows over the last decade is of great concern to many Member States. In this connection, I am concerned to note that the core resources of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) have been greatly reduced over the past five years, to the point where its universality is seriously threatened. I applaud the efforts the new administrator is making to turn this situation around and to put UNDP on a more secure footing, with more clearly defined priorities.

Private capital flows to developing countries have shown major increases. There is a tendency, however, for such investment to be heavily concentrated on a few countries where investment prospects seem brightest. Many developing countries remain vulnerable and can be all too easily marginalized. Official development assistance continues to be an essential tool to help build the capacity of countries in sectors such as education so that they can benefit from the unstoppable phenomenon of globalization. It is certainly a matter of particular pride for me, as New Zealand's Foreign Minister, to have overseen increases in New Zealand's official development assistance funding effort — up by some 40 per cent since the time of the Rio Summit in 1992.

I welcome, also, the positive steps that are being taken on the financing for development and debt-relief initiatives. It is vital that we continue the dialogue among Member States and with the international financial institutions to ensure a sounder basis for meeting the challenges of international development.

Last year I referred to the important role the United Nations has to play in shaping the moves towards globalization and the opening up of opportunities for world trade. Later this year, in Seattle, we expect to launch a new round of multilateral trade negotiations. This will clearly provide a forum in which to advance trade liberalization and the rules-based trading system. The role of these negotiations in promoting the development prospects of all countries and in fostering the integration of least developed countries into the global system will be a particular focus. Deliberations in this Organization at many levels will help to advance our people's understanding of the value and purpose of the global trade agenda and their ability to benefit from it. However, I would emphasise the importance of major trading partners in continuing to play a leadership role. The adoption of trade restrictions and distortions by wealthy economies does much to erode their moral authority in the broader debate.

New Zealand continues to attach the utmost importance to seeing all countries work together to bring about a world free of nuclear weapons. For this reason we were a cosponsor last year of the so-called New Agenda resolution, which called for faster progress towards the elimination of nuclear weapons. The cosponsors will be presenting this moderate resolution again this year, and we urge all countries to look carefully at it.

The Conference on Facilitating the Entry into Force of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty will meet in Vienna in a week's time. I would urge all those countries which have not ratified the Treaty to do so, so that it can enter into force without further delay.

Strengthening the United Nations remains an important goal for New Zealand. I take this opportunity to commend the forward-looking management reforms introduced by the Secretary-General. They have greatly improved policy coordination among senior management and have produced positive, tangible effects throughout the Secretariat. Improving the way the Organization plans its programmes and expenditures is a critical next step, where work is already under way. There must be a greater focus on results when budgets are prepared in order to promote the best use of the resources of the Organization, and in turn the best return for Member States.

This year marks the fiftieth anniversary of the Geneva Conventions, and last year we commemorated the fiftieth anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. Events over the past 12 months have shown that challenges to the values and principles embodied in the Universal Declaration remain as daunting as ever. In this interdependent world in which we live, New Zealand continues to see the United Nations as central to international efforts to work together to protect and promote, for all our people, those fundamental human rights and freedoms to which we are committed under the Universal Declaration.

Next year the United Nations will host the millennium summit. This symbolic event will provide an excellent opportunity for Member States to reaffirm their commitment to the ideals of this great Organization. Recognizing the frailties of our collective performance to date, and the critical importance of finding workable solutions for the future, I call on all Member States to take the opportunities offered by the millennium summit to enter into open and constructive dialogue and step into the next millennium with an unequivocal recommitment to the visionary principles enshrined in the Charter.

It is nine years since I first addressed this body in 1991 as the Foreign Minister of New Zealand. For the United Nations, and particularly the Security Council, it has been a tumultuous period. After the cold war the number of problems multiplied; the world's expectations of what the United Nations could deliver were raised above the possible; and the solutions demanded required determination, resolve, tact, understanding and imagination. The demands on the United Nations will not lessen, but each year must see a better performance than in the past. However, as this may well be the last statement I make to this body, I want to thank all United Nations officials and peacekeepers everywhere: those I have met here in New York; in Cambodia and in Somalia; in Mozambique; in Bosnia, Croatia and Albania; in Papua New Guinea and, of course, now in East Timor. I thank them for their continuing, often unsung and heroic efforts. They are much appreciated.

The President: I now call on the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Tunisia, His Excellency Mr. Saïd Ben Mustapha.

Mr. Ben Mustapha (Tunisia) (*spoke in Arabic*): I would like first of all to extend to you, Sir, my warmest congratulations on your election as President of the General Assembly at its fifty-fourth session. I have no doubt that your long diplomatic experience and your deep knowledge of international relations will enable you to guide the work of this session to a successful conclusion. Your election is a token of appreciation from the international community to you personally and to your

country, Namibia, which is noted for its prestige in Africa and in the world. Tunisia, which stood by the fraternal Namibian people in their successful struggle against colonialism, is proud of its close ties with your country and looks forward to strengthening and developing them further in the interests of our two countries and peoples.

Allow me to take this opportunity to express our sincere gratitude to your predecessor, Mr. Didier Opertti, for his valuable efforts during his presidency of the fifty-third Assembly and for the wise manner in which he conducted its work, which had a very positive impact on the deliberations.

I take this opportunity also to express to the Secretary-General our great appreciation for his relentless efforts in promoting and strengthening the pacific, negotiated settlement of disputes and crises in various parts of the world. We commend him for his dedication to enhancing the effectiveness and efficiency of the Secretariat and to strengthening the Organization's role in meeting humankind's desire for progress, security and peace.

I extend Tunisia's congratulations to the Republic of Nauru, the Republic of Kiribati and the Kingdom of Tonga on their admission to our Organization.

What characterizes this session is that it is being held at the close of a decade that began with the prospect of an end to the cold war, witnessed the emergence of new concepts and future-oriented visions designed to avoid any repeat of past errors and crises, and aimed to establish a new world order based on security, peace, cooperation and stability. Although optimism marked the early stages of this new era, subsequent developments have compelled the international community to conduct a comprehensive review of the immediate past in order to solve the various difficulties and problems of our world today.

As we meet during this session at the dawn of the twenty-first century, we have a propitious opportunity to discuss and exchange views about various possible methods for amending the approach that we have taken over the last few years and identifying its weaknesses and deficiencies. We must then devise a renewed approach that will provide future generations with the capacity to adapt, overcome obstacles, preserve international peace and security and ensure well-being and prosperity for all humanity.

For the framework of such a renewed approach to maintaining international peace and security, we have in mind three main themes. First, the change that has taken place in the approach to armaments and to their role in the world. Secondly, the growing need for increased attention to settling regional disputes. Thirdly, the transformation of economic and social development into one of the cornerstones of peace and security globally. Despite the great strides which the international community has made in these three areas, much remains to be done before we achieve the goal of a qualitative transition that would allow us to guarantee security and tranquillity for all people and for the generations to come.

Our world possesses huge arsenals of weapons, especially weapons of mass destruction, nuclear weapons foremost among them. It is extremely important, in our view, for the nuclear Powers to take rapid steps to eliminate these weapons, especially given the limits of the current non-proliferation regime in the long term and the impossibility of contemplating non-proliferation as a substitute for completely dismantling and destroying all nuclear weapons and banning them in the future.

We believe that as we move closer to the twenty-first century, the international community has a historic opportunity to achieve this noble goal or at least to conclude an agreement on nuclear disarmament. In working towards this goal, it is extremely important to ensure that non-nuclear weapon States are not subject to the use or threat of use of nuclear weapons in violation of their security and territorial integrity. Consideration must be given to the fact that non-nuclear-weapon States constitute the overwhelming majority of Member States and have freely chosen not to possess nuclear weapons.

We would like, in this regard, to address another aspect of disarmament: small arms. We all know how destructive small arms can be. Tunisia supports all international efforts to curb small arms proliferation and trafficking.

Tunisia, which has abided by all disarmament treaties and conventions, reiterates its total commitment to the disarmament objectives and its strong resolve to continue contributing towards the achievement of these goals in the various relevant fora, especially the Conference on Disarmament in Geneva. Tunisia recently had the honour of joining the Conference, following the Conference's decision last August to expand its membership by admitting five new countries.

In implementation of the Ottawa Convention on the Prohibition of the Use, Stockpiling, Production and

Transfer of Anti-personnel Mines and on Their Destruction, Tunisia destroyed large quantities of mines during an official ceremony on 29 June 1999 attended by a representative of the United Nations in Tunis. We hope that all States parties to the Convention will participate in the Convention process without delay so that the Convention's objectives are achieved and transparency is promoted pursuant to the Convention's article 7.

The outbreak and persistence of conflicts in many parts of the world compel our Organization to be constantly ready to assume its responsibilities and to play the role it has been assigned in this regard by the Charter. We believe that the efforts aimed at consolidating preventive diplomacy, collective security, the peaceful settlement of disputes and adherence to international legality are foundations of international peace and security and should be further upheld.

However, despite the numerous successes of our Organization in this field, there are still many hotbeds of tension and war that require more coordination and cooperation if they are to be curbed and prevented from spreading. I should like in this regard to address the question of so-called "humanitarian intervention". This is a sensitive and delicate issue. It requires, in our view, a thorough and profound analysis taking into account all its aspects, especially those related, first, to the sovereignty of States and the need to preserve it as a natural right enshrined in the Charter of the United Nations as a fundamental element of international relations; and, secondly, the necessity to save the lives of civilian populations in times of conflict, in accordance with the principle of international solidarity.

All States Members of the Organization are called upon to consider all the implications of these principles in order to reach consensus on this issue and to contribute in a considered and balanced way to the debate on it. Such a debate should not be confined to the Security Council, but should also involve the General Assembly.

The issues related to the security problems confronting the African continent should remain at the top of our priorities. These issues need the strong material and financial support of the international community if they are to be resolved. Africa, in turn, has given top priority to the question of the settlement of internal disputes. The Organization of African Unity Mechanism for Conflict Prevention, Management and Resolution has played an important role in this regard. Since its inception, the Mechanism has achieved encouraging results that reflect the determination of African countries to rely, first and foremost, on their own capacity to solve the problems that threaten the security of the continent, in full coordination with the United Nations. Given its importance, the Mechanism needs stronger financial and technical support from the international community, which would help to enhance its capacities and to develop its effectiveness and efficiency.

We must stress in this regard the extreme importance of development, a basic guarantor of lasting security. Indeed, there can be no stability without sustainable development. Despite the relentless efforts of African countries in the political, economic and social fields aimed at improving the situation of their peoples, there are still many difficulties that prevent many countries from implementing their development programmes.

It has become a matter of urgency that the African continent receive strong and continuous support on the basis of its national priorities. We note in this regard that the initiative of the Security Council and the General Assembly to convene meetings to discuss and follow up the situation in Africa bears testimony to a growing and consolidated awareness of the need to address African problems. While commending this approach, we must emphasize the need to adopt practical plans which Africa's partners can translate into concrete realities in an effective manner.

Mr. Rodríguez Parrilla (Cuba), Vice-President, took the Chair.

We commend the various initiatives of the United Nations, its specialized agencies and the Bretton Woods institutions to promote sustainable development in Africa. We believe, however, that it is important to ensure coordination between United Nations initiatives and those undertaken by donor countries if such initiatives are to succeed. In this framework, we look forward to the adoption of practical initiatives that respond to the proposals spelt out in the report of the Secretary-General on the causes of conflict and the promotion of sustainable peace and development in Africa, particularly regarding the debt problem.

In Tunisia, we are aware of the important role that economic and geographical groupings play in today's world in addressing the challenges posed by globalization and in adapting to constant important changes. This awareness prompts us to pursue our endeavours, along

with our brothers in the Maghreb countries, to complete the establishment of the Arab Maghreb Union, which remains a strategic and firm choice and which also represents the aspirations of the people of our region to prosperity, security and integration. This choice is even more pressing in the light of our country's endeavours to set up a Euro-Mediterranean space as a framework for cooperation between all Mediterranean countries, for solidarity between its peoples and for a cultural and social dialogue on the basis of the noble values and high principles in which we all believe.

With respect to the Middle East, where the conflict has lasted more than half a century, peace, which is cherished by the peoples of that region and indeed by the whole world, still faces difficulties despite the efforts that have been made by the international community, particularly since the early 1970s. There is no doubt that a comprehensive, just and lasting peace is the only way to consolidate the foundations of stability and security and to enable all parties to devote their resources and energies to the development efforts of their countries and to ensuring the well-being of their peoples.

Tunisia has followed with satisfaction the new developments brought about by the signing of the Sharm el-Sheikh Memorandum, which has created a new encouraging climate for the reactivation of the peace process and the faithful and full implementation of all agreements and commitments. We hope that the final status negotiations will lead to the resolution of the most important issues, particularly the recognition of the inalienable rights of the Palestinian people, in particular its right to establish an independent State on its land, with Jerusalem as its capital.

On the basis of this firm position of principle in support of the peace process, and eager as it is to see the peace process succeed on all tracks, Tunisia insists on the importance of reactivating negotiations on the Syrian and Lebanese tracks from the point at which they stopped, as well as on the necessity of the complete and unconditional withdrawal of Israel from South Lebanon and from the Syrian Golan Heights, in compliance with the relevant United Nations resolutions and on the basis of the principle of land for peace. Occupation and peace cannot co-exist.

Regarding the Lockerbie issue, Tunisia expresses its satisfaction at the recent positive developments, to which it and other parties of good will contributed. It also reiterates its call for a speedy and final lifting of the embargo imposed on the brotherly Libyan people.

With respect to the question of Iraq, Tunisia reiterates its call for a peaceful solution in the context of international resolutions. It also calls upon the international community to join efforts to put an end to the suffering of the Iraqi people so that all the efforts of the peoples of that region can be directed towards development and the promotion of stability. Thus, Tunisia, which has called for respect for international legality, expresses the hope that a solution will soon be found to all the humanitarian issues resulting from this tragedy, particularly the question of Kuwaiti prisoners of war and missing persons, in conformity with the relevant Security Council resolutions.

Regarding the question of the three islands of Greater Tunb, Lesser Tunb and Abu Musa, Tunisia reiterates its support for the resolution of this dispute between the United Arab Emirates and Iran through peaceful means, either through direct dialogue or, if that should prove impossible, by referring the question to the International Court of Justice.

In another region of the world, the international community has focused its attention in recent months on another important question, that of East Timor. In this regard, we welcome the adoption of Security Council resolution 1264 (1999) and hope that its implementation will enable the people of East Timor to achieve self-determination and will, at the same time, maintain security in the region and preserve the sovereignty and integrity of Indonesia. We commend Indonesia's courage in responding to the wishes of the people of East Timor and the international community. We believe that a final settlement of this issue can be achieved only in an atmosphere of conciliation that involves all parties concerned, and with the support and blessing of the international community.

One of the most important phenomena characterizing the end of this century is the growing globalization that now dominates various aspects of our social life. Although it has created new opportunities in the field of economic development, it is likely, if not brought under control, to lead to further disruption of international relations and development plans. The international community must seriously and firmly address the challenges posed by globalization. This entails the demonstration of stronger political will from all parties and the implementation of all the commitments made, particularly at the important conferences of the United Nations.

Follow-up and implementation of the recommendations of international conferences is, in our opinion, of great importance. In this regard, we would like to express our satisfaction with the continuing work of the preparatory Committees for the two special sessions of the General Assembly to review and appraise implementation of the Beijing Platform of Action dealing with women's and family issues and of the Copenhagen World Summit for Social Development, which will be held in June, in New York and Geneva respectively. However, we note with concern that, despite the efforts made at the United Nations, which has placed the eradication of poverty high on its agenda, the agreed target set at the Copenhagen Summit for increasing the amount of official development assistance to 0.7 per cent of the gross national product of developed countries has not yet been met.

This situation requires action at the international level aimed at achieving solidarity, which we consider an essential link between peoples. In this context we place the recent call by His Excellency Mr. Zine El Abidine Ben Ali, President of the Republic of Tunisia, to all world leaders and to various United Nations and other international institutions for the creation of a world solidarity fund. The objective of this fund would be to collect voluntary donations and contributions to be used in the fight against poverty and in the development of the poorest regions in various parts of the world, particularly in the least developed countries that undergo various tragedies and crises. Our country will endeavour, through its contacts with brotherly and friendly countries and at the United Nations and other international organizations, to rally the necessary support for this noble humanitarian project and for the elaboration of modalities for its creation as soon as possible. This will enable us to be more responsive to our options and commitments, which have gained the acceptance of the international community and which have been set forth in the recommendations of various international conferences.

We also rely on United Nations institutions, such as the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), the World Health Organization (WHO), the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) and other institutions in view of their prestige and experience as well as their interest in the fight against poverty, to contribute efficiently to the speedy creation of this fund.

The year 1999 represents a new landmark in the consolidation of the democratic process in Tunisia. It will be marked by pluralistic presidential and parliamentary elections based on full transparency and freedom of choice for citizens within the context of freedom and respect for law. Tunisia has undertaken a programme of substantial reforms over the past 12 years in different areas, having amended the Constitution, allowing political pluralism and a multiparty system, eliminating special courts and enacting legislation in conformity with our obligations to international treaties in the field of human rights, which Tunisia has been among the first countries to ratify.

In the same spirit, Tunisia has long undertaken to promote women's freedom and gender equality. It publishes a special journal on children's rights and a code on the care and rights of the elderly, handicapped and other vulnerable categories. All these reforms embody Tunisia's global vision regarding all dimensions of human rights and confirm our country's strong belief in the universality of such principles.

The creation of many multilateral organizations, particularly the United Nations, represents the most important achievement of the international community in this century. Thanks to the solid institutional edifice in which our Organization holds a privileged place, rules regulating relations between States have been codified, and common objectives, programmes and strategies have been elaborated in order to address the problems confronting the world.

Despite the successes and achievements in this regard, certain weaknesses still mark international relations, and various new disruptions and dangers have emerged. In the context of all the developments and changes that have occurred, the United Nations remains the ideal forum and haven for the elaboration of collective strategies to overcome challenges.

We believe that the millennium summit, to be held during the fifty-fifth session of the General Assembly, constitutes an ideal opportunity, which the international community should fully utilize, evaluate its accomplishments and build a strategy based on them in order to usher in the new millennium with diligence and confidence. That summit will also be a historic occasion for heads of State and Government to debate this matter.

In this regard, we believe that the Organization needs to be provided with all the necessary means to play an effective role in international relations and affairs. Reforming the Organization and its various structures on

the basis of the developments and changes that have occurred will certainly ensure its vitality. Among the urgent tasks that the Member States need to address today is to reform the Security Council in a way that would reflect the profound changes the international community has witnessed, ensure global representation in this vital body and consolidate the principles of transparency and democracy in its working methods.

We need to stress, in this context, that we expect the reform of the Security Council to lead to the fulfilment of the requests of developing countries, primarily African countries, to have permanent representation on the Security Council, which would allow them to contribute to the tasks and responsibilities assigned to this body in the maintenance of international peace and security.

In conclusion, I would like to reiterate the full commitment of Tunisia to the purposes and principles of the United Nations as enshrined in the Charter, the same purposes and principles it has adopted and implemented in its foreign policy. Tunisia is a peace-loving and justice-loving nation. It has endeavoured relentlessly since its admission to this body, and in all the forums to which it belongs, to contribute with all the means at its disposal to strengthen the foundations of international peace and security. It makes every effort to encourage dialogue and negotiations as the proper means for the settlement of disputes and crises. It has participated in United Nations peacekeeping operations since the early 1960s and presently contributes to three of them. Last June Tunisia signed with the United Nations an agreement that would place standby forces at the disposal of the Organization.

Tunisia spares no effort in contributing to all initiatives aimed at promoting cooperation, solidarity and understanding between countries and peoples. That is the direction we have freely chosen and that we intend to pursue if and when my country is given the honour of being elected to a non-permanent seat on the Security Council for the period 2000-2001 by the Member States and with the full support of the brotherly African Group, other groups and friendly countries. We look forward to the support of all Member States so that my country can continue working with them towards fulfilling the task of advancing the purposes and principles of the Charter.

The Acting President (*spoke in Spanish*): I call on the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Armenia, His Excellency Mr. Vartan Oskanian.

Mr. Oskanian (Armenia): May I begin by congratulating the President on his election. I am confident that the skills and vast experience he has acquired throughout his distinguished diplomatic career will provide the guidance we need to guarantee the successful outcome of the session. I must also recall the valuable contribution of his predecessor, Mr. Opertti, to the work of the last session of the General Assembly.

I would like to take this opportunity to extend my warm welcome and congratulations to the Republic of Kiribati, the Republic of Nauru and the Kingdom of Tonga on their admission to the United Nations.

As the twentieth century comes to an end, it is evident that all countries in the world — advanced, developing or transitional — will be substantially affected by globalization. Further specialization and the widening of markets through trade, the larger division of labour and a more efficient and diversified allocation of financial resources should increase overall productivity and raise living standards. However, no country will benefit from this trend spontaneously and automatically. The major tasks which Governments face today are development and the pursuit of sound policies and appropriate structural adjustments to meet the challenges and take advantage of the opportunities that globalization offers. While sound domestic economic planning and reforms are critical to meeting the challenges of globalization, regional cooperation and integration processes are essential to maximizing the emerging benefits and opportunities.

We, as a country and the region as a whole, are trying to adjust to the multiple stresses of post-Soviet economic, cultural and political transformations. Clearly these problems can stress relations as much within States as between them. Armenia does not see either itself or the region as being permanently condemned to marginalization; rather, it believes that close cooperation in the region, whether political, economic or security based, will help bring lasting stability and prosperity based on a sense of solid and shared emergent values. Cooperation within the framework of regional economic initiatives, such as the Interstate Oil and Gas Transport to Europe (INOGATE) programme and the Transport Corridor: Europe-Caucusus-Asia (TRACECA) project, is essential. Armenia is sincerely open to such cooperation, although we have to state with regret that the blockades imposed on Armenia by Turkey and Azerbaijan are a serious obstacle to such cooperation. It is obvious that the region's high potential cannot be fully utilized if attempts are made to isolate one of its constituents. Such attempts

are doomed to failure and will adversely affect all concerned in the region.

The Black Sea Economic Cooperation (BSEC) is another mechanism that could contribute to the region's economic development. The activities of the recently established Black Sea Trade and Development Bank will considerably contribute to carrying out the projects elaborated by the member States of the Black Sea Economic Cooperation. In this regard, Armenia fully supports the granting of observer status in the General Assembly to the BSEC.

A young republic in transition from a long nightmare of totalitarian, single-party State to the emergence of a democratic, free-market, open society, Armenia must simultaneously consolidate its State structures, move its economy forward and resolve the Nagorny Karabakh conflict. It must do all three at the same time, for they are in fact interdependent. First and foremost, Armenia must ensure that the Armenian population of Nagorny Karabakh continues to enjoy its security within its own lands. Our recent memories of vulnerability and insecurity make it impossible for any Armenian anywhere to accept anything less than the inalienable right of the people of Nagorny Karabakh not to be subjugated, not to be dominated and not to be subordinate. Armenia understands this and is actively engaged in pursuing in every possible forum a resolution of the conflict with Azerbaijan that would achieve peace without endangering the hard-won and legitimate rights of our own people to live in secure dignity and freedom.

Since 1992 the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) has played a key role in the process of finding a peaceful solution to the conflict in Nagorny Karabakh. It has been actively involved, through the various permutations of the Minsk process, to define the elements for a durable peace and stability in the region of the Transcaucasus. Armenia is committed to pursuing every possible and credible attempt to resolve the conflicts that linger in the region. It is committed to exploring every avenue for peaceful relations with all its neighbours, relations based on mutual respect and recognition.

The OSCE, through the Co-Chairmen of the Minsk Group, is trying to reconcile seemingly incompatible principles. We have always remained opposed to one-sided orthodoxy and have always advocated a more flexible approach. It is therefore with interest that Armenia and Nagorny Karabakh received the Minsk Group Co-Chairmen's draft proposal during their latest visit to the region. My Government, as well as the authorities of Nagorny Karabakh, considered this formulation by the Co-Chairmen a more realistic effort in trying to address the thorny issue of the status of Nagorny Karabakh with minimal prejudice to either of the competing claims.

Indeed, we must distinguish between stability and the forced maintenance of the status quo. Conflating the two is neither wise nor practicable in the long run. A status quo in political life is never inherently permanent, and a viable policy of stability requires a mechanism to pursue an evolutionary, dynamic process of managing change. We have new and dynamic challenges to the status quo; we should not be shy in addressing these challenges creatively and objectively to conceive more adaptive answers rather than falling back into a comfortable, yet dangerously elusive, status quo.

As Armenia actively defends and pursues the Nagorny Karabakh people's right to self-determination through peaceful means, we also sympathize with and support all other just self-determination claims in other parts of the globe. Armenia applauded the Indonesian Government's courage when it announced the conduct of the referendum on East Timor's independence. Today we are concerned with the latest developments, but we hope that the results of the popular consultation will be fully respected. We also commend the role that the United Nations has played in organizing and supervising the popular consultation.

Armenia also welcomes the most recent positive developments in the Middle East peace process. We hope that the Palestinian people's right to self-determination will be fully realized, thus bringing lasting peace and stability to the Middle East.

The last decade of the twentieth century has been marked by serious achievements in the sphere of disarmament and global and regional arms control, and more remains to be done. At the global level, that would mean reviewing the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) in the year 2000; completing the work of the Biological Weapons Convention Ad Hoc Group on a compliance and verification protocol; completely eliminating existing stocks of chemical weapons and ensuring the universality of the Chemical Weapons Convention regime. Similarly, at the regional level, we attach great importance to the successful conclusion of the Treaty on Conventional Armed Forces in Europe (CFE) adaptation process, which will be signed by heads of States at the OSCE summit this November.

We are convinced that the adapted Treaty will significantly contribute to the strengthening of European security.

In pursuing its national policies, Armenia has made it a priority to support the international efforts in securing peace and stability throughout the world. We believe that our full participation in the work of the Conference on Disarmament will allow us to make further contributions to the issues of arms control and disarmament. We hope members will support Armenia in its willingness to become a full member of the Conference on Disarmament.

Armenia welcomes the millennium summit initiative. At the threshold of the new millennium, it is important for heads of State and Government to discuss the tasks that the United Nations is going to undertake in providing global peace and security. Believing that the United Nations should play the leading role in the formation of an international anti-criminal strategy, Armenia supports the idea of holding, in Vienna in the year 2000, the Tenth United Nations Congress on Crime Prevention and the Treatment of Offenders.

We call for the accession of the maximum number of countries to universal conventions against terrorism and support the Russian proposal on a United Nations convention for combating acts of nuclear terrorism. Armenia, likewise, supports the initiative of holding a conference or a special session of the General Assembly against terrorism in 2000.

On 1 October, Armenia will sign the Statute of the International Criminal Court, thus becoming the eighty-seventh State to do so.

Maintenance of international peace is one of the most important functions of the United Nations. The challenges that the international community faces today are diverse and complicated. This holds true especially for the reform of the Security Council, since ensuring peace and security throughout the world depends on a Security Council which functions effectively. Security Council resolutions, including those on peacekeeping operations, should be unbiased and universal and reflect a common approach to conflicts, based on internationally accepted principles and criteria. One way to strengthen the role and function of the Security Council is to ensure a more equitable representation of the membership of the United Nations in that organ, in accordance with the sovereign equality of States and other relevant provisions of the Charter, and to make its work more transparent. Representation in the Security Council that is more equitable can be achieved by increasing the number of its members, taking into account the growth in the membership of the United Nations.

After this brief comment on matters that concern Armenia's current affairs, its membership in the United Nations and the outstanding issues of the Nagorny Karabakh conflict, allow me a moment of reflection. We are often so preoccupied by immediate crises that lingering, chronic and fundamental phenomena do not always get our full attention.

At this end of the century and millennium and on the threshold of a new era, we would not be candid if we did not admit to a certain disappointment, a certain sad recognition that we, as a collectivity, a community of nations, have not come as far as people everywhere would have wished us to come. I am sure we are not alone in our disappointment as we look around us and see that the hopes of 1989 have not been fully realized in the last 10 years: Rwanda, Kosovo and East Timor are all, historically speaking, very much in the present.

It is not for lack of charters, conventions and universal declarations that tragic events and murderous actions are committed, often by States, and even in the name of those same charters, conventions and declarations. After the Second World War, after the end of the cold war, we might have been justified in expecting some respite from the organized display of man's inhumanity to man, of fratricidal war between citizens and State attempts to exterminate some part of its own people. But of course very recent experience tells us that the persecution of innocent civilians on no other grounds than their ethnicity, religion or national origin continues unabated.

Armenia and Armenians have a unique history through which to interpret these events. We notice the ever more frequent use of the term "genocide" in continent after continent and we are reminded of our own tragic experience as genocide victims at the beginning of this century. It is sad but true that the genocide of Armenians, which began in 1915, opened this century of horrors. We at least are convinced that nothing contributes as much to the repetition of horrors as the reluctance and unwillingness with which those complicit in them tell the truth, or even their avoiding doing so at all. Denying the reality of evil, portraying it as merely relative and rendering it banal have done much to have evil seen as a political event to manipulate and equivocate and prevaricate about in the name of realpolitik.

In Armenia, our democracy and future prosperity depend on there coming a time when, through peace, the Caucasus will fulfil its promise as a region of neighbourly cooperation and economic growth. Without regional political stability, the regional economic prospects for all countries of the Caucasus will remain precarious. And unless the security needs and the aspirations of the people of the region are satisfied, there can be no political stability.

The Acting President (*spoke in Spanish*): I now call on the Minister of State and Minister for Foreign Affairs, Cooperation and Francophonie of Gabon, His Excellency Mr. Jean Ping.

Mr. Ping (*spoke in French*): I am pleased to convey to the President on behalf of the delegation of Gabon, our warmest congratulations on his well-deserved election to the presidency of the General Assembly at its fifty-fourth session. In addition to the tribute his election pays to Namibia, it is eloquent testimony to both his personal and professional qualities. We hardly need to point out that he was one of the principal architects of Namibia's independence. Today, the President has the honour of presiding over the last Assembly session of the century and of leading the United Nations towards the new millennium. Allow me through you to assure him of my delegation's complete and wholehearted cooperation.

To his predecessor, Mr. Didier Opertti, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Uruguay, I extend my deepest gratitude for the work accomplished during his term of office.

I congratulate the Secretary-General for his initiatives and actions towards peace and security worldwide.

To the three new Member States, the Republic of Kiribati, the Republic of Nauru and the Kingdom of Tonga, which have just joined the great United Nations family, I convey my warmest congratulations.

I am convinced that this session will enable us to share our thoughts on the increasingly complex challenges that our Organization must face if it is to create the necessary conditions for the maintenance of international peace and security and for economic and social development.

We are entering a major period of transition marked by the end of one century and the beginning of another, so it is beyond necessary for the international community to see to it that the new millennium is spared the scourges that sap humankind's strength.

During this century that is now coming to its end, the world has undergone a rapid acceleration in the pace of history and a thorough transformation as a result of combined effects of the explosion in the numbers of new technologies, the expansion of trade and the breathtaking increase in the role played by markets. The scale of this transformation, which affects all aspects of people's lives, is today so great that no nation can escape its influence.

Unfortunately, nations are not all in the same boat: some steadily accumulate progress and prosperity while others seem destined to a bottomless pit of destitution. I am thinking here specifically about the African countries which, unlike the rest of the world, have not yet taken advantage of the profound changes in the world, and whose access to the so often trumpeted shared prosperity is denied. I am thinking also about one and a half billion men and women around the world who live on less than a dollar a day, and the billion adults who can neither read nor write. I am thinking too about the 300 million Africans who eke out their lives in a state of abject poverty on the outer margins of the global village.

Add to this bleak picture the heavy burden of debt, which is strangling our economies, compromising any attempt at development and reducing us to the level of modern-day slaves at the tender mercy of our creditors.

The budgetary resources allocated to service external debt overwhelm all efforts to meet the most basic needs of our people. It is therefore crucial that the recurring problem of debt should be considered not only in terms of socio-economic indicators but also taking into account a State's efforts to combat poverty.

While welcoming the recent initiative undertaken at Cologne by the Group of Seven and Russia with a view to cancelling the debt of the most heavily indebted countries, the Government of Gabon is nevertheless disappointed by the fact that the eligibility criteria for those countries are so restrictive; for it must be recalled that debt, like poverty, is a constant threat to the stability

of States. Therefore, the burning question of global proportions that we must all face is how to take advantage, both individually and collectively, of the current prodigious global prosperity and the enormous accumulation of wealth created by globalization in order to substantially reduce the poverty of nations and of their people.

As the Minister Fischer of Germany said recently,

> "Africa must not be a loser in globalization. The rich countries of the North have not only a duty, but also an interest, in assisting their poorest neighbours in the southern hemisphere to seize the opportunities that globalization offers them and to allow them to participate more equitably in the global economy".

My country feels that the time has come for the international community to seriously tackle the unavoidable problem of the eradication of poverty, at least in its most extreme form. We share the firm conviction that our Organization must promote, in the words of the Charter,

> "higher standards of living, full employment, and conditions of economic and social progress and development".

This would be the first step towards eliminating the imbalances that are among the underlying causes of many conflicts around the world, for a world in which some make progress while others fall behind carries within it the seeds of its own instability. Can we therefore move towards a new concept of the idea of security that no longer focuses on the security of nations alone, but that focuses above all on the well-being of peoples? The sine qua non condition for sparing future generations from the scourge of war is to move from a culture of war towards a culture of peace.

There are genuine reasons to be concerned about peace and stability in the world. Maintaining international peace and security, a task assigned to our Organization, has been severely put to the test by the outbreak and persistence of a number of crises. In this regard, Africa has become the main theatre of these devastating crises, which result in countless victims, refugees and displaced persons.

In spite of this regrettable situation, we have seen some encouraging signs concerning the restoration of peace in certain African subregions. The recent signing of the peace Agreement by all the parties to the conflict in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, including all the rebel movements, now opens up the way for a lasting settlement of the conflict. We urge all the parties to translate into action the will they expressed in signing the Lusaka Agreement on 10 July 1999. It is now urgent for the international community, and for the Security Council in particular, to take the necessary steps for the full implementation of the Agreement without delay.

In the neighbouring Republic of the Congo, the authorities have again recently expressed their willingness to engage in dialogue with the opposition. In return, the opposition has also made clear its intention to take part in an inter-Congolese dialogue in order to achieve lasting peace.

The recent Lomé Agreement on Sierra Leone is also a positive sign of a return of lasting peace to that country.

My country is pleased with the resumption of the peace process in the Middle East and urges the complete application of the Wye Plantation agreements, as well as full compliance with the agreements signed in the past.

Despite all of this progress, we cannot overlook the fact that important efforts still have to made in Angola as a result of UNITA's refusal to implement the Lusaka agreements.

Likewise, despite the prospects that are beginning to appear, the border dispute between Ethiopia and Eritrea still remains a burning issue.

According to the most recent report of the Secretary-General, Somalia is, unfortunately, still without State institutions. The time has come to reintegrate that country into the concert of nations.

Guaranteeing lasting peace and security is today a collective matter. Although the primary responsibility for the maintenance of peace falls to the Security Council, it is appropriate for the United Nations to encourage the development of regional peacekeeping and security mechanisms, in accordance with Chapter VIII of the Charter. Significant progress has been made in Central Africa in preventing and managing conflicts within the framework of the United Nations Standing Advisory Committee on Security Questions in Central Africa. The implementation of the early-warning mechanism and the creation of the high council for peace and security in Central Africa are perfect examples of this.

It is also worth mentioning the joint military exercises to be held by the member States of the Committee in Gabon during the first half of the year 2000 to simulate peacekeeping operations. Furthermore, in preparation for the military exercises that will be held in Gabon within the framework of strengthening African peacekeeping capabilities, a military-diplomatic seminar took place in Libreville in June 1999, with the participation of 51 countries and international organizations.

In the last few weeks, the Security Council has held public debates on such vital topics as children and civilians in armed conflicts. And five days ago, I had the honour of participating in another public debate of the Security Council on small weapons. This matter is part of the United Nations efforts to work towards complete disarmament. Indeed, the illegal circulation of massive quantities of light and small-calibre weapons in the world hampers development and represents a real threat to international peace and security. The nature of these weapons unfortunately helps fuel the sad and widely condemned phenomenon of the use of children as combatants in the many conflicts that break out around the world. The same applies to large-scale banditry.

In any case, we cannot envision a world at peace if the international community does not actively mobilize to help developing countries emerge from the vicious circle of underdevelopment-violence-underdevelopment. If luck has heretofore spared us from the horrors of war, Gabon is not immune to the backlash of the armed conflicts that plague some of our neighbours. As Security Council resolution 1208 (1998) clearly indicates, asylum countries pay a heavy price for their solidarity with people driven out of their homes as a result of combat. The consequences of refugee flows on the security, environment and economies of host countries are sometimes incalculable, especially when the presence of combatants among the refugees is used as an excuse for troops to carry out raids in the host country.

Even though we live in peace and have never experienced a domestic or inter-State war, Gabon nevertheless shoulders its share of the burdens of war. We are facing massive migratory flows that are leading to serious internal upheavals, and we recently welcomed some 50,000 refugees.

Given the extent of the situation, for which my country was not prepared, the President of the Republic of Gabon organized on 11 August last a mini-summit in Libreville with the participation of a number of his peers from the subregion. That summit considered the possibility of Africans' taking greater control of the question of refugees and displaced persons, with the support of the international community.

On that occasion, President Bongo proposed the creation of an African agency for emergency humanitarian intervention. I would urgently appeal to the international community to provide greater assistance to African refugees. We strongly hope that an emergency programme can be set up that would relieve their suffering and facilitate their return to their country of origin. The international community has the means to do so, as it has proved in other situations.

I would like to take advantage of this opportunity to pay warm tribute to Mrs. Sadako Ogata, United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, who, during the international action taken in favour of Kosovo, heightened the international community's awareness of the particular situation of African refugees.

Let me now tackle the question of development from the perspective of my country's experience. As in other African countries, the socio-economic situation of Gabon is precarious. I shall not then resort to clichés such as saying that my country is an "African emirate" because of our potential in raw materials, to the extent that today we are the only sub-Saharan nation to be classified by international financial and monetary institutions as an upper-middle-income country. As a result, we are denied access to flexible conditions for our loans and for our debt service.

However, the Human Development Index, which places us in 124th place, clearly shows that Gabon is in a very similar situation to that of other African countries. That is why we have undertaken all of the necessary structural reforms to join the global economy and to participate in subregional and regional integration. We have liberalized our economy by lifting tariff and non-tariff barriers and restrictions as well as by instituting customs and tax reform. We have privatized our principal semi-public corporations in order to make them more effective and competitive. We have created a new juridical and institutional environment that is stable and will encourage investment and promote the expansion of the private sector. Finally, we have set up effective provisions for cooperation and regional integration in the framework of the Economic and Monetary Community of Central Africa and of the Economic Community of Central African States.

The stage has been set, but the actors — meaning the investors — have not yet made their entrance. Foreign direct investment has thus far systematically avoided our continent.

We feel, however, that the world economy stands to gain by taking advantage of the immense potential of the African market, which will soon have a billion consumers in a continent that is overflowing with oil, gold, diamonds and other raw materials required by industries of the North.

My country's leadership is dedicated to the promotion of democracy and the institutions that guarantee it— hence all of the political changes we have experienced and are experiencing, which have made Gabon an example of a smooth transition from a single-party regime to political pluralism.

It is against this backdrop that recently, in the presence of international observers and for the second time since the advent of political pluralism, free and fair presidential elections were held in my country. The President of the Republic, El Hadj Omar Bongo, was re-elected in a peaceful social and political context, a guarantee of democratic legitimacy.

Democracy which is accompanied by good governance, the rule of law and respect for human rights is the most important factor in the transition towards a culture of peace. For lasting peace is a prerequisite for the exercise of all the rights and obligations of peoples, and it is the only soil in which democracy and development can take root.

It is therefore up to the United Nations system and its Member States to ensure that these goals and principles, so dear to us, become a reality for all in the new millennium.

The Acting President (*spoke in Spanish*): I now give the floor to the Minister for Foreign Affairs, Tourism and Information of Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, His Excellency The Honourable Allan Cruickshank.

Mr. Cruickshank (Saint Vincent and the Grenadines): I take this opportunity to congratulate Mr. Theo-Ben Gurirab on his election to the presidency of this session of the General Assembly. I am confident that his vision and energy will guide this session to a successful conclusion.

I also thank Mr. Didier Opertti, who led the fifty-third session of the General Assembly with remarkable distinction and efficiency. I commend Mr. Kofi Annan, the esteemed Secretary-General of this Organization, of whom the people of the Caribbean are particularly proud for his vision and managerial skills as he heads the United Nations, in precarious financial circumstances, responding to increased demands with diminishing resources. I wish to assure the Secretary-General of the continued support and cooperation of the Government of Saint Vincent and the Grenadines.

I join previous speakers in welcoming the Republic of Kiribati, the Republic of Nauru and the Kingdom of Tonga as new Members of the United Nations family. Their membership strengthens the universal character of our Organization.

I extend condolences to the families of the victims of the earthquakes in Turkey, Greece and, more recently, the Republic of China on Taiwan. I reiterate the sentiments of sympathy already transmitted to the Government and people of the Bahamas, a sister country in the Caribbean Community, and to the United States of America in relation to the devastation wrought by Hurricane Floyd.

The fifty-fourth anniversary of the founding of the United Nations, coming at the end of a century that has seen war and destruction on the one hand and unprecedented developments in science and technology on the other, provides a timely opportunity to reflect on the Organization's achievements, assess its continued relevance in a radically changed environment and chart an appropriate course of action for the future. Many powerful forces believe that the United Nations has perhaps outlived its usefulness and exists now only as the world's most expensive debating club. Ministers of Finance are presently convened in Washington, D.C., at the annual meeting of the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank Group. There, too, the opinion can no doubt be heard that circumstances have now overtaken the Bretton Woods institutions.

The big and powerful nations of the world can afford to argue thus, but for small, vulnerable, developing countries such as Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, these institutions are important buffers in the interplay between finance and politics in the international arena. The operating budgets of many transnational corporations are far greater than the national budgets of developing countries such as mine, and we are painfully

aware that the international development agenda is controlled by these corporations.

Despite the technological advances of the last decade and the tremendous increase in worldwide commerce, the benefits of globalization have not been evenly distributed and it is abundantly clear that developing countries continue to be marginalized. While we acknowledge and respect the general thrust towards open markets, competition and free trade, I must reiterate my country's position regarding our vital trade in bananas. Even as we move to diversify, improve quality and pursue alternative strategies and options for development in tourism, financial services and informatics, our economic survival and social stability remain closely linked to the banana trade and the income it provides for our farmers. Indeed, there is a strong and persistent correlation between the rate of economic growth and the performance of the industry. This is further illustrated by the following facts: in Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, the contribution of the banana industry to direct employment is 40 per cent; in the Windward Islands as a whole, banana export earnings account for over 50 per cent of the gross domestic product; and windward Islands exports account for only 1 per cent of the world trade in bananas.

The imminent collapse of our major banana market demonstrates just how powerless small developing States continue to be against powerful countries and mega-corporations. The disregard for our interests and, indeed, our survival, by the United States of America, which does not export a single hand of bananas, is truly inexplicable. The inevitable consequences of this stance will be economic and social dislocation, manifested in increased unemployment, impoverishment for our farmers, crime and the erosion of basic human rights and dignity.

The iniquitous and restrictive immigration policies of certain developed countries have served only to exacerbate the social disintegration of our societies, which are already under severe stress.

If small developing economies are to be able to attract investment, expand production, improve product quality and meet standards — in short, compete effectively and grasp the opportunities presented in the World Trade Organization agreements — it is imperative that recognition should be given to their need for support and for adequate transitional periods to fully liberalized world trade, which should apply also to the banana trade.

As a corollary to our overall economic development strategy, the Government of Saint Vincent and the Grenadines continues to explore, with the assistance of friendly nations, options for enhanced airport development on mainland Saint Vincent. The requirements for agricultural and economic diversification make this endeavour even more urgent.

We are exceptionally grateful to the European Union for the support which it is continuing to give to ensure our survival, even in the face of threats to its own economic prosperity. Saint Vincent and the Grenadines is involved, with other members of the Caribbean Community (CARICOM), in a fundamental process of deepening regional integration through the establishment of a single market and economy by 2001. We are taking important steps to facilitate the free movement of goods, services, capital and people in the countries of the Community. We are doing this at a time when the momentum of trade liberalization and economic globalization has never been greater.

The region is also committed to the establishment of the Free Trade Area of the Americas by 2004. CARICOM has established regional negotiating machinery to coordinate the region's participation in external trade negotiations, including the Seattle Round of multinational trade negotiations.

Saint Vincent and the Grenadines is resolute in its opposition to the international trade in drugs. To this end, my Government is moving bilaterally and with member countries of the Organization of Eastern Caribbean States and CARICOM, to establish agreements with third countries on mutual assistance in criminal matters. The Government of Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, recognizing its own limitations in confronting the enormous power and resources of drug traffickers, has signed a "ship rider" agreement that gives authority to pursue such criminals in the territorial waters of our archipelagic State.

Governments in the small developing countries of the Caribbean pay a high political price for cooperating with the developed countries in the fight against drugs. There were loud protests from certain sections of the population against the Government when the security forces of Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, in collaboration with the Regional Security Service and contingents from other friendly countries, launched an eradication campaign in our mountainous interior: they questioned the Government's cooperation at a time when

access for bananas and other products from the Caribbean to the European market was being challenged.

My Government will continue to honour its commitments under all international agreements to which we are signatory. We have enacted appropriate stringent measures in our financial regulations to ensure that proceeds from the illicit drug trade are not laundered in our financial system. The efforts of economically vulnerable countries such as ours in combatting the scourge of drugs must be recognized and supported by the international community in general, and by traditionally friendly countries in particular.

Our countries do not wish to be forced out of the world trade in legitimate products, causing our peoples to turn in desperation to trafficking in illegal products. In Saint Vincent and the Grenadines and in other countries members of the Caribbean Community (CARICOM), we believe in stability based on a solid foundation of democracy, respect for human rights and the creation of economic and other opportunities for the development of our peoples. CARICOM has built an outstanding record in this regard. The recent mission to Haiti headed by our own Prime Minister, The Right Honourable Sir James Mitchell, to examine that country's readiness to conduct general elections, is another example of CARICOM's commitment to those principles.

Saint Vincent and the Grenadines places very high priority on education, training and human-resource development. These are a very important part of the declaration of principles adopted by the leaders of the 34 countries of the western hemisphere at the second Summit of the Americas, held at Santiago, Chile, in 1998.

I take this opportunity to reiterate the gratitude of the Government and the people of Saint Vincent and the Grenadines to the Government and the people of Cuba, which despite their difficult economic circumstances, caused by the continuing trade embargo against that Caribbean country, have offered numerous scholarships to the young people of Saint Vincent and the Grenadines. Saint Vincent and the Grenadines places great value on this unmistakable act of friendship and assistance.

Small island developing States such as Saint Vincent and the Grenadines attach great importance to such issues as the integrity of our coastal and marine resources, solid-waste management and natural-disaster preparedness, because we are conscious of the negative repercussions that can result if effective measures are not put in place. We run the risk of damaging our fragile ecosystems to the detriment of development and tourism, and moreover compromising their sustainable use and enjoyment by future generations. It is for that reason that CARICOM condemns in the strongest terms the shipment of hazardous material through the territorial waters of the Caribbean countries. Without the benefit of scientific proof of the origins and reasons for the recent fish kill in our waters, there is cause for serious concern; investigation in this regard is ongoing. Saint Vincent and the Grenadines shares the concerns expressed by other small island developing States and strongly supports the adoption of a draft resolution on small island developing States recognizing the Caribbean Sea as a special area in the context of sustainable development.

The vulnerability of small States has been made more acute because of lack of capacity, declining aid flows, graduation from concessionary financing, the disappearance of trade preferences, and a lack of competitiveness. The implementation of the Barbados Programme of Action for the Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States is therefore imperative for our survival.

My delegation fully supports the efforts of the international community in addressing the conflicts in Kosovo and in East Timor. We look forward to lasting peace and stability in those areas.

Saint Vincent and the Grenadines also applauds the efforts and commitment of Prime Minister Barak of Israel and Chairman Arafat of the Palestine Liberation Organization to bring peace and security to the people of their region.

A draft resolution on the readmission to this body of the Republic of China on Taiwan was once again defeated. Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, however, strongly supports the aspiration of those 21 million people to exercise their right to share and participate in the activities of this community of nations.

My country has consistently expressed its views in relation to reform of the United Nations in general and of the Security Council in particular. I will not revisit them now, but I wish to reiterate that Saint Vincent and the Grenadines strongly favours reform of the United Nations to give more equitable consideration to the concerns of the majority of countries comprising the General Assembly. Let us remodel it along more democratic lines to address the realities of the world today.

As we approach the new millennium, my delegation would like to urge all Member States to demonstrate their unwavering support for the goals and ideals enshrined in the Charter of the United Nations: peace, security, human rights, fundamental freedoms, international cooperation, and development for all mankind.

The Acting President (*spoke in Spanish*): I call next on the Minister of State for Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation of the Democratic Republic of the Congo, His Excellency Mr. Yerodia Abdoulaye Ndombasi.

Mr. Ndombasi (Democratic Republic of the Congo) (*spoke in French*): The convening in the splendid metropolis of New York of this last General Assembly session of the millennium affords me the happy opportunity, on behalf of the people, the Government of Public Salvation and the head of State, His Excellency President Laurent-Désiré Kabila, of the Democratic Republic of the Congo, to convey our warmest greetings to all people the world over who love peace and justice.

It is my pleasant duty also to congratulate the President of the General Assembly and the other Assembly officers on their unanimous election to the leadership of the Assembly at its fifty-fourth session. My country views the election to the presidency of Mr. Theo-Ben Gurirab as recognition of his many sterling qualities, both human and professional, and as an acknowledgement by the international community of the important role played by his country, Namibia, in building an Africa and a world that will be marked by peace, political stability and economic prosperity. The President may be sure that the delegation of the Democratic Republic of the Congo will unreservedly support him in fulfilling his mandate and in guiding the work of the Assembly to a successful conclusion.

I also extend to his predecessor, Mr. Didier Opertti, our full appreciation of the extremely important work he did during his presidency, as well as the commitment he showed throughout to the triumph of the ideals embodied in the United Nations Charter.

Finally, my delegation would like to welcome here in our world Organization three new Members: the Republic of Kiribati, the Republic of Nauru and the Kingdom of Tonga.

I invite Members to read my prepared text at their leisure, so that I may say a few other things. I begin with a good quotation, from Article 2 of the United Nations Charter:

> "The Organization and its Members, in pursuit of the Purposes stated in Article 1, shall act in accordance with the following Principles.
>
> "1. The Organization is based on the principle of the sovereign equality of all its Members.
>
> "2. All Members, in order to ensure to all of them the rights and benefits resulting from membership, shall fulfil in good faith the obligations assumed by them in accordance with the present Charter.
>
> "3. All Members shall settle their international disputes by peaceful means in such a manner that international peach and security, and justice, are not endangered.
>
> "4. All Members shall refrain in their international relations from the threat or use of force against the territorial integrity or political independence of any state, or in any other manner inconsistent with the Purposes of the United Nations".

I say to representatives: This is the United Nations Charter, your Charter. Are there represented in this Hall — yes or no — Members that violate these principles governing relations between nations? Are there represented in this Hall — yes or no — Members that do worse than those that do not pay their dues, or pay them late, regarding which immediate reminders are sent, and rightly so, since the rules of procedure of the Organization of which they are Members prescribe that for its proper functioning each Member must pay its dues? Failing to do so even means being stripped of the right to speak here at the United Nations. So, if you have your right to speak taken away, if you are punished as a Member of the United Nations because you do not pay your dues, what about those who violate Article 2 of the Charter, who cross the boundaries of another State with their armies, sow hardship in that country, occupy vast portions of its territory, plunder its natural resources, steal the fauna and rare species of animals which international organizations recognize as being received by other countries, carry out a blitzkrieg such as the one in the early 1940s, without warning, without provocation, entering the country of another people with their arms

and everything else they need, under pretexts which I shall expose in a little while.

On 2 August 1998, some two years ago, our brothers from the hills of Rwanda, Burundi and Uganda invaded our country in an unprovoked blitzkrieg, without having declared war, and it continues to this very day. For two years now those Members of the United Nations have been violating Article 2, and they continue to violate it, with arrogance and total impunity, which is not the case for those who fail to pay their dues.

It is perhaps better to violate Article 2, occupy other countries, pillage them, deport their inhabitants and torture children, women and old persons, than it is to commit the mortal sin of failing to pay up. There are two yardsticks, double standards, which we regard as an immense injustice.

As I speak I feel the presence of illustrious persons who have spoken from this rostrum in the past, such as Cabral, Nkrumah and — I say this with a great deal of emotion — Lumumba, who came here to denounce what was being set in train more than 30 years ago, under United Nations banners which is now being repeated. We know the United Nations. The French rightly say "A cat that has been scalded is even afraid of cold water." They have already come, those United Nations forces; they came to restore peace, and the result was that for one of the most illustrious sons of our people, the most admired African nationalist President Patrice Lumumba, the flag of the United Nations served as a shroud. We do not wish, we will not allow, that same flag to be a shroud for those who have taken up the torch that fell from Lumumba's hands and who carried it, with some help of course, as far as lying down — with their boots on — in Mobutu's bed. This is something with which the Assembly is familiar.

It is on behalf of my President, my friend, my long-time comrade, that I speak. As representatives will see, and as I often say, we will have no more charming "Rastas", because we lost our hair waiting for President Kabila to return to relight the torch that fell from Lumumba's hands.

If people do not watch out, if they let things slide along, if they tolerate arrogance and do not stand up to impunity, there are those who will begin to dream of wrapping Kabila up in the United Nations flag, as was done in the case of Patrice Lumumba not long ago.

When events are repeated, they do not always happen in exactly the same way, but sometimes the repetition strikes a familiar chord. Now we see the United Nations delaying putting an end to what it calls euphemistically the "conflict" in the Great Lakes region. This terminology is being used for some reason — but what? A foreign army crosses the border, occupies the country, a part of the country; it pillages the country's wealth — and the United Nations calls this a "conflict"? We should check our dictionaries. This is a war. Instead of shouting themselves hoarse about sending peacekeepers, Member States must send people who can put an end to the war. This is what I am waiting for. Our Rwandan, Ugandan and Burundi brothers must be solemnly requested here and now to go back home. They have no business being in our country. They are undermining all national reconstruction efforts. This should be clear to those who understand the condition in which we found this country, which used to be called Zaire and which we now call, as Lumumba called it, the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

The presence of these outsiders, their occupation, impedes our efforts to reconstruct our country. They came upon us like thieves who attack without warning. They attacked while we were busy sowing corn, peanuts and beans, and we were doing so because that was what we was needed in this country that is overflowing with diamonds, gold, cobalt, copper and so forth. In order to help our people we had begun by planting peanuts corn and beans, but our efforts were stopped cold by these people who are now in our territory, who came from the hills, who came to defend their borders — their borders that, according to them, were threatened by genocidal bands in our country.

I ask the Assembly to look at a map of Africa, a map of the Congo in particular. I come from the Atlantic Coast province of Bas-Congo. Do you know where these people who began the war came from, in order to secure their borders? They came from 2,000 kilometres away from my province. They began in my province in order to secure borders 2,000 kilometres away. They brought soldiers 2,000 kilometres from their borders in order to begin the occupation of our country. Luckily, they took a licking, and they would all have been wiped out if the Americans had not asked us to allow them to return home along a designated route. They retreated after their thrashing and tried their luck in the east of our country.

After the ceasefire requested by Secretary-General Kofi Annan, United Nations staff went to the area to

carry out an order of the World Health Organization to vaccinate all children up to five years of age. We have vaccinated them in the part of the country that we continue to control. But these others — who only have two hands, both of which are busy pillaging — have yet to vaccinate the children in this age group. Thus, these children are in danger not only of polio, but also of other diseases that the agencies of our Organization have been striving to eliminate from our continent.

These soldiers do not have time to vaccinate our children. They do not even have time to pillage effectively because these Horatii and Curiatii have taken to fighting each other on our soil. They came to take control of our country, but now, how strange, they are fighting each other, these people who came to teach us democracy, these people who came to restore peace. In order to have a break from their looting, they are enjoying a little war on our land, and in the process destroying the 3 million doses of vaccine that the United Nations, through the World Health Organization, sent to Kisangani. They shoot at each other, each band allied with this or that local. This is what is happening.

And then these people take their place here as United Nations Members — after having treated us like that, and as they continue to do so. They are building up their arsenals, bringing in troops, taking towns. What reassures us is the teaching of the Marquis de Sade that taking is not the same as possessing. Thus, these people are taking towns but they do not possess them. And they will not posses them because, just as in erotic relations, there is no possession without consent — that consent that has been given to us. Otherwise, our people would not have fled to the forests to escape from these people who come from the hills. Our citizens' lengthy stay in the forests has led to the reappearance of some diseases that were eradicated as long ago as the Belgian colonial era.

Having to flee the invaders like the plague makes our citizens' lives more difficult. And these people from the hills continue to advance even though they signed with us, last 10 July, a Ceasefire Agreement that lacks both fire and a cease, as they continue to advance and lay siege to our cities.

Their latest exploit, which they are now engaged in, is to lay siege to the city of Mbuji-Mayi, the world diamond capital, but also the world capital of children afflicted with polio. I do not think that their haste and willingness to return to Mbuji-Mayi are out of desire to vaccinate the poor Congolese children who are infected with or at risk of getting polio. These people from the hills do not have a third hand, as I said earlier, yet I am sure that, driven by their greed, they are going to take as many diamonds and as much copper and cobalt as they can — and at the risk of fighting each other for these minerals, since Uganda also wants to take them. The statistics on sales of diamonds indicate that last month our Rwandan brothers sold more than a million carats of diamonds — a mineral not mined in their country — and with the money from the sales they are buying weapons so as to be able to fight us. Then they take more diamonds, buy more weapons and continue to fight us.

In this Hall speeches have been made against dirty money. Therefore, we are outraged to see bloodstained cobalt, bloodstained copper, bloodstained gold and bloodstained diamonds for sale on the international market, and to see that it does not occur to the buyers of this booty to put a stop to this practice by refusing to buy it — even though they oppose dirty money. Double standards continue to prevail.

Dirty money poses a threat to the world. And yet, while the blood of the Congolese people is spattered on our cobalt, our copper and our gold, that doesn't seem to bother those from all over the world who buy them and give money to the pillagers and occupiers our country. If we revisit this issue, I reserve the right to address it again.

I wish, however, to speak out loud and clear against the infamous pretext that has aroused the world's prurience and sensitivity about genocide. Those who are guilty of genocide are in our country right now. Let them leave and go on sowing misery in their own countries: Rwanda, Uganda or Burundi.

As I said at the outset, President Kabila has raised Lumumba's torch and welcomed those who sought refuge in our country, because over there you do not seek refuge — you get your throat slit. I was just a schoolboy when I saw Hutus fleeing cutthroat Tutsi and Tutsi fleeing cutthroat Hutus. They all sought refuge with us. That is how those who helped us, who walked with us on our march on Kinshasa, came to be refugees in our country — they fled Hutus who would have cut their throats. That is at the heart of the current instability and reflects the values of our brothers in Rwanda. We must help our Rwandese to change their political culture.

When the "one man one vote" law was enacted in 1960, the obsession of each of these groups was to seize

power and abuse it in order to hasten the carnage. This carnage has been alternating and reciprocal and did not begin in 1994. I cited a date when I was in short pants, and I can assure the Assembly that it was not yesterday. It is the open faucet that produced the interahamwe that we must close. Rwanda must become democratic; Rwanda must adopt a culture of politics and abandon its culture of carnage. Rwanda must leave our country; Uganda must leave our country; Burundi must leave our country and turn over the task of providing security to United Nations observers, who will take their place and serve as a buffer force between us. Those people are our neighbours and we can never replace our neighbours, but they are on our territory, which means they are no longer our neighbours. I ask the Assembly to help us to resume our status as neighbours. Let them go back home and if there are problems that we must settle among ourselves, we shall settle them by peaceful means.

I am speaking without acrimony. We hold out our hands to our brothers from Rwanda, who have been here for several days. I offer them signals of friendship when we pass, and they respond. We are here so that in three months, when the new millennium dawns, we will not still be fighting. One must deal with urgent matters quickly.

The Lusaka process, in which I participated, raised hopes that have been dashed by dilatory tactics. One moment the Congolese and Rwandese affiliates who refuse to come; the next, it is the Ugandans or their Congolese puppets. Here we are on 29 September and nothing has yet been done seriously to implement an Agreement that was reached on 10 July.

That is why we ask the Assembly, if only out of respect for the Articles of the Charter, to do something about it. It is intolerable and incomprehensible that these people remain, and may even take the floor here, while they continue to violate the United Nations Charter and the principles that bring us together here. If you violate the principles of an organization to which you belong, you are no longer worthy of belonging.

We must remind our brothers that, as Members of the United Nations, they are bound to respect the Charter. This cannot be done by occupying other people's countries. If differences must be settled by invasion and plunder, there will no longer be a United Nations, because there will no longer be any rules to unite us. That prompts my request to the Assembly, because the suffering being endured by the Congolese people and the atrocities being visited upon us are unimaginable.

Under the very nose of the Vatican, in the Italian mission of Kasika, these new-style Huns entered, tore open the chest of a traditional chief, pulled out his heart, shredded it and distributed the pieces like hosts. The killers who did this sucked on the bloody heart as if it were an ice-cream cone. We have seen this and continue to witness such acts. Our United Nations mission is at Members' disposal to provide irrefutable testimony, which we have published in a three-volume white paper that could easily grow into further volumes describing similar incidents. We have requested that this white paper be issued as a working document of the Security Council. All are invited to study it in order to understand precisely what is happening and to put an end to this situation — to save the United Nations itself, to help us Africans, and the Congolese in particular, who had to wait 32 years to defeat and eliminate a regime of notorious satraps, only to see new satraps step in two months later to occupy our country and put it to the sword.

Help us to make our Rwandese, Ugandan and Burundian brothers understand that they must go home. They have no business in our country; let them relinquish their place to United Nations forces, which will secure their borders. That is in itself a fiction that we have not had an opportunity to dwell on. They helped us to raise Lumumba's torch. They were in our army. Most officers in our army were from Rwanda, as was the Chief of Staff, who dispatched his troops on the basis of his particular military skills. Moreover, these people have occupied that region of our country for two years and are still hunting the Interahamwe, as the Incas were once hunted here. They will not stop until Joe the Ugandan and Bill the Rwandese have extended their hunting grounds to the entire territory of our country while they prance after the Interahamwe.

This is just a pretext. If they were not able to catch a single Interahamwe while their officers were in our army; if they have been unable to stop the interahamwe in their two-year occupation of that region, then the task is beyond them. It must be left to the United Nations to unseat these Interahamwe, if they exist, and let us pursue our national reconstruction.

I have a great deal more to say and believe that we will have further opportunities in due course.

The Acting President (*spoke in Spanish*): I call on the Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Lithuania, His Excellency Mr. Algirdas Saudargas.

Mr. Saudargas (Lithuania): It is a special pleasure for me to see Mr. Theo-Ben Gurirab guiding the General Assembly this session over the junction of two centuries and millenniums. We will lend all possible support to his endeavours, including through the Permanent Representative of Lithuania, who is also one of his Vice-Chairmen.

Another landmark of this session is the fact that we have grown. We welcome the Republic of Kiribati, the Republic of Nauru and the Kingdom of Tonga to this house of nations where all, large or small, are equal. We are glad to see nations from the Pacific enrich the organization. On behalf of the Lithuanian Government I pay our deep respects to the Secretary-General, who has always been a brilliant servant of peace around the globe.

Speakers before me have referred to the symbolic meaning of this session of the General Assembly. It may be just a simple turn of our calendar pages or we can make it a stepping-stone to a better world with less violence, more food for the hungry, less deliberately caused suffering and death, more care for the helpless and more shelter for the homeless.

This century has taught us many lessons. Yet, even if we have avoided another world war, we have witnessed too many wars. The nature of crises has changed. Member States should be able to find common ground in upholding the principles of the Charter and acting in defence of humanity. We should devise ways and means to prevent humanitarian catastrophes and alleviate profound human suffering. Just this last year, Angola and Kosovo, Sierra Leone and East Timor have posed new challenges to the United Nations and made us re-evaluate our actions in conflict prevention; the role of the United Nations Security Council and its interactions with regional organizations; the Council's credibility with regard to speed of deployment; the role of civilian police and civilian administration; and the problem of impunity. When evidence of the murder of helpless people percolates through international borders, the dilemma emerging before the international community becomes a moral one of the sanctity of human life and strict international standards.

It is precisely towards this end that the United Nations system is undergoing changes. A number of administrative measures have been taken, especially those within the power of the Secretary-General. One of the most urgent measures which must be taken is reform of the Security Council. The Council has too often been accused of failures in the maintenance of international peace and security in the specific cases I mentioned.

The efficiency of the Security Council's actions can be enhanced by improving its representativeness, legitimacy and credibility, thus generating wider acceptance of its decisions. This would be possible primarily through an enlargement of the Council's membership. The two most qualified industrialized countries could become permanent members of the Security Council: their membership would strengthen the Council and ensure democratic decisions. A broader representation of developing nations on the Council would also reinforce its legitimacy and enhance respect for it: they deserve additional seats, both permanent and non-permanent.

In recent years we have seen the development of the United Nations response away from peacekeeping to more active conflict prevention and crises management of civilian. Internal crises often lead to the complete destruction of societies and their structures: repair and rehabilitation of collapsed countries by the international community are needed.

The United Nations needs both the means and cooperation from all if it is to fulfil its mandate in terms of its primary responsibility for maintaining international peace and security. In this connection, Lithuania signed a standby agreement as early as the beginning of 1998 and provided a detailed description of its contribution. A substantial part of our contribution is comprised of well-trained civilian policemen who are now doing their duty by serving in Kosovo.

A comprehensive set of political measures will have to be elaborated before and adopted at the millennium summit, which should be a breath of fresh air for the Organization. We take this seriously and are ready to assist in designing a meaningful future for the United Nations.

Situations that deteriorate into conflicts are ignited by a variety of causes, usually a combination of them. The wave of economic crashes that swept through Asia, Latin America and some European countries has had a global impact. The quick recovery of many economies shows that democracies with free market economies have the strongest immunity against macroeconomic illnesses. Markets and democracy allow for the fairest distribution of resources within societies which would otherwise be feeling the pain of economic injustice.

Similarly, concerns about the potential and actual violence which more often occurs within than between States are almost always well-founded in places with poor human rights records. No one today is surprised by news of violence sparked by various rebel groups that feel marginalized in the States where they live.

Many instruments must still be designed to uphold the principle that those responsible for gross violations of human rights and crimes against humanity — who still expect impunity — must be held accountable. The establishment of the International Criminal Court is one of the fruits of the new developments in international relations. We are committed to the early entry into force of the Rome Statute and to an effective International Criminal Court.

Weaponry and armaments can be reduced through common actions, regardless of borders. There is literally a consensus among nations that weapons of mass destruction must be eliminated, but in reality the process of nuclear disarmament is unacceptably precarious. We see reductions in numbers of warheads in some places and the development of nuclear weapons in others. Also, the biological and chemical weapons which States have reduced have become available to non-State terrorist entities that feel almost no qualms about using them. I see no other way to build a safer world than by reducing, eliminating and very strictly prohibiting weapons of mass destruction and the means for delivering them.

Conventional arms and weapons are also weapons of mass destruction of life: half a million lives in Rwanda were wiped out with clubs and machetes that can only be considered weapons. Lives are lost to firearms and landmines all over the world, even in places that can hardly qualify as battlegrounds. The elimination of landmines is under way. Nowhere else but in this Hall can we begin effective conventional disarmament to be carried out under the responsibility of all States.

Europe happens to be blessed with good regional security instruments, the best of which was nevertheless inspired by the deaths of millions in senseless wars. The European security charter, the concepts for which are now being discussed in the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE), will further build on the ideals of democracy, peace and unity set out in the Charter of Paris for a New Europe on the basis of the Helsinki Final Act. The implementation of OSCE principles, including a country's right to choose its own security arrangements, is fundamental to ensuring peace and security. Finally, regional, subregional and bilateral practical cooperative efforts do enhance broader European endeavours and processes, including complementing — not undercutting — the work of other Euro-Atlantic institutions.

We believe in collective security and have made membership in effective alliances of democratic and peace-loving nations — the European Union and the North Atlantic Treaty Organization — our priority. The collective security that we have chosen is the most efficient means of meeting our legitimate needs.

Lithuania works actively in the Baltic region to create security and stability based on cooperation and good-neighbourly relations. The Baltic Sea region is becoming one of the most stable and dynamic, developing and promising regions in this part of the world.

Nine days ago, Secretary-General Kofi Annan spoke from this very podium about a progressing supremacy of collective needs over individual needs. In fact, his speech was a testimony of brave and modern thought. It deserves a place in textbooks for politicians and diplomats.

Conflicts are but one challenge for us. There are so many inhabitants on Earth who need our help yet sometimes cannot even ask for it. Children deserve our strongest love, and yet they are helplessly suffering in many parts of the world. They do not realize that the adult world will soon celebrate the tenth anniversary of the adoption of the Convention on the Rights of the Child, which has been ratified or acceded to by 191 countries — more than the number of United Nations Member States. It is the most universal human rights treaty, the violation of which must be inconceivable and punishable. The newly adopted Convention on the Elimination of the Worst Forms of Child Labour should also become universal and support compliance.

This year will also be the twentieth year since the adoption of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW). It is symbolic and crucial that this Convention has been strengthened by the optional protocol. Lithuania supports the proposal by Austria, after its adoption by the United Nations General Assembly, to have this new human rights instrument opened for signature on 10 December, which marks Human Rights Day 1999. States have to give women the chance to address their grievances to the CEDAW Committee as soon as possible, perhaps even at the special session of the General Assembly on "Women

2000: gender, equality, development and peace for the twenty-first century" to be held in June in the year 2000.

Ideals advocated by Woodrow Wilson at the beginning of this century are celebrating their second birth at the very end of the century. I am convinced that after many ups and downs, the evolution of humankind is finally taking the straight and right course.

The Acting President: I now call on the chairman of the delegation of Antigua and Barbuda, His Excellency Mr. Patrick Albert Lewis.

Mr. Lewis (Antigua and Barbuda): Antigua and Barbuda offers hearty congratulations on the election of the president of the General Assembly at its fifty-fourth session. His efforts towards bringing about the independence of Namibia are well known, and many of us remember when he occupied a seat on the right side of the main section of this Hall, sitting as an observer behind the name plate of the South-West Africa People's Organization (SWAPO).

Mr. Gurirab's call for the return to Africa of its plundered artwork and artifacts struck a chord, as those of us who studied the African liberation struggles will recall that some 25 years ago, when he was a younger individual, he pleaded with this body for the return of African icons which adorned European and North American museums and private collections. My country is most supportive of his plea and would urge that the priceless treasures of artwork, icons and relics be returned to the continent from which they were taken.

My country also wishes to thank his predecessor, Didier Opertti, who hails from Latin America and the Caribbean, for the astute and skilful manner in which he conducted the affairs of the fifty-third session. Likewise, my nation's sentiments go out to Secretary-General Kofi Annan, and we wish him continued success in the arduous tasks of bringing peace, harmony, development and justice to a global community not yet united into a true family of nations.

A warm welcome is simultaneously extended to the Republic of Kiribati, the Republic of Nauru and the Kingdom of Tonga on becoming full-fledged members of the United Nations.

To the people of our sister Caribbean Community (CARICOM) State of the Bahamas, we extend our profound sympathy in the wake of the devastation wrought by Hurricane Floyd upon the islands of Abaco, Eleuthera, San Salvador and Cat Island, as well as other parts of the country. We thank donor countries and international institutions for the assistance given in the past, and we hope that there will be a speedy response to the needs of the Bahamian community at this time.

In this regard, special mention has to be made of Kuwait for the manner in which it follows up on assisting small Caribbean countries in times of peril, and we urge the international community to work towards the preservation of that country and the maintenance of the dignity of its people.

It was with delight and glee that I read the Secretary-General's descriptive definition of globalization, as it took in some of the considerations that my country has brought before this body over the past three years. He stated,

> "Globalization is a summary term for the increasingly complex interactions between individuals, enterprises, institutions and markets across national borders. The manifold challenges it poses, challenges that cannot successfully be addressed by nation States acting on their own, provide the most immediate and obvious reason for strengthening multilateral cooperation. Globalization is manifest in the growth in trade, technology and financial flows; in the continuing growth and increasing influence of international civil society actors; in the global operations of transnational corporations; in the vast increase in transboundary communication and information exchanges, most notably via the Internet; in transboundary transmission of disease and ecological impact; and in the increased internationalization of certain types of criminal activity. Its benefits and risks are distributed unequally, and the growth and prosperity it provides for many is offset by the increasing vulnerability and marginalization of others — and by the growth of 'uncivil society'." (*A/54/1, para. 220*)

Clearly, globalization leads to the reduction of the sovereignty of States, with the weakest and the smallest being the biggest losers. Sadly lacking in the arguments for globalization is the need to give consideration to the pace, direction and content of liberalization due to different levels of development and the need to build up national capabilities. Above all is the insistence on the principle of free trade for the developing world and an exemption from the same for the industrialized countries.

Protective devices are inbuilt for farmers in the dominant economies, which include subsidies, guaranteed markets, payments not to produce beyond a certain level in order to maintain price levels and quite often insistence that imported farm belt products come in by way of limited means of processing and under the most stringent of guidelines. On the other hand, when former colonial countries provide preferences to their previous colonies of exploitation, challenges are mounted through the World Trade Organization by multinational enterprises. There is no more blatant example than Chiquita in regard to the Caribbean banana producers.

The sad thing is that there is clear knowledge that in modern times there has never been free trade. It is not my intention to de-glorify Richard Cobden and John Bright, but the repeal of the corn laws in nineteenth-century Britain had more to do with the failure of the potato crops in Britain and Ireland, strikes by workmen against wage reductions and an alliance of industrial and commercial interests against the landed gentry than it had to do with free trade. Yet irrespective of the fallacy of this free trade argument, recipients of benefits under the Lomé Convention are literally being told that they, but not the dominant Powers, must conform to and operate under the fallacy.

Any disaster to banana production in the Caribbean will affect not only the banana-producing countries, but all of the Caribbean Community. Our countries are striving to remove themselves from dependence on aid. Glenys Kinnock, a member of the European Parliament, put it succinctly when she stated that the banana trade provided a ladder out of poverty for the Caribbean region and that the call for the regime to be dropped and direct aid to be substituted was unrealistic. She went on to state that it was wrong to claim that attempts to diversify were not taking place.

In CARICOM, we do not wish to become international mendicants; otherwise the current situation, in which some dominant countries exercise undue pressure upon our modus vivendi, will increase to the point where we will have to dance to whichever tune the piper or pipers play.

The United Nations should be viewed as the foremost international body with a semblance of egalitarianism. It should not be viewed as the institution of the dominant countries in the five regional groups; and, more than that, it ought to be the body that stands up to the encroachment of multinational enterprises that attempt to stifle the lifeline or lifeblood of legitimate and sovereign countries. If indeed the United Nations is the champion of equality, of sovereignty, of the maintenance of traditional practices which in reality do not harm others, then the collective countries should denounce this imposition by a multinational entity, which will bring ultimate and profound hardships upon our humanfolk — be they young men or old men, children or maidens, matrons or old women. We have said it before, and will reiterate that what is being inflicted upon the Caribbean banana producers is an act of war.

The perils of our States are certainly not limited to bananas, and Antigua and Barbuda, as well as the majority of countries represented on the Executive Board the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), were most surprised to experience a challenge from a member of the Security Council relating to our first-country cooperation framework. This was presented, by a country with which we have cordial relations, as being a matter of principle, as Antigua and Barbuda's per capita income is $8,000 and in 1998 it ranked twenty-ninth in the *Human Development Report*. There was absolutely no mention of the fact that in the vulnerability index, Antigua and Barbuda ranks extremely high, due in part to the frequency with which hurricanes batter our twin-island State or threaten our lovely shores. Consequently, Antigua and Barbuda once again had to offer a reminder that its graduation from the loan windows of international financial institutions and from development assistance of other international agencies, based only on the narrow criterion of per capita income, which ignores the serious and persistent problems confronted by Antigua and Barbuda and most Caribbean small island developing States, is both unfair and unjust. We also had to point out that 5 per cent of our country's population consists of Montserratans who have been displaced by volcanic eruption. This has meant expanding our infrastructure to accommodate the unfortunate souls from the Emerald Isle.

Antigua and Barbuda supports the concept of UNDP and the United Nations Population Fund working with and rendering assistance to countries described as having transition economies, as well as countries which have suffered the ravages of internecine warfare, that have absorbed significant numbers of refugees and which are subject to many vulnerabilities, including natural disasters, and are victims of economic practices which work against their advancement. The work of UNDP is valued worldwide, and countries which are most vulnerable should certainly be at the forefront for

assistance and guidance. We have to ask once again if we must be penalized because of our successes. I sincerely hope that in this body, particularly among the major financial contributors, that it is not the view that small island developing States cannot advance beyond a certain level of development, as, otherwise, they would be overreaching themselves and delving into a domain reserved for members of a certain club. Antigua and Barbuda takes its role in the United Nations very seriously and will remain dedicated to the principle of egalitarianism.

We annually recite our vulnerabilities, paying most attention to the furore of natural disasters, and over the last 10 years my country has experienced four hurricanes. Whereas it is a glorious sight to witness volcanic eruptions in Montserrat from Antigua, the reality of the dangerous consequences is always present. We are additionally faced with the activities of Kick'em Jenny, an undersea volcano off the spice island of Grenada. The Caribbean Development Bank is providing a grant to the Seismic Research Unit of the University of the West Indies for the establishment of a mechanism for continuous monitoring of the volcano. According to one scholar,

> "Not only will the communities of the Grenadines and nearby islands have to guard against debris ejected during a volcanic explosion, but the entire Caribbean will be jeopardized by the threat of seismic waves, known as tsunami".

This is yet another example of our vulnerability.

Irrespective of our trials, tribulations and unfair castigations, my country, when appraised objectively, has been considered a marvel; hence its continued high ranking on the human development index. We practise the Westminster model of parliamentary democracy and do so effectively. Our national elections are open and transparent. Our first national hero, Sir Vere Cornwall Bird, appropriately dubbed Father of the Nation, died this year, and Members of Parliament in both the House and the Senate were lavish in their praise of one who was internationally acclaimed — particularly in Africa, where he had an impact on many of its leaders, both during and after the colonial era, and in the African diaspora of the New World.

We have remained committed to the empowerment of the socially and economically challenged. Women occupy senior positions in the civil service and are represented in significant numbers in the professions. In one they outnumber men. In the area of violence against women, legislation has been enacted to give greater protection to the female members of our society. In the desire of the Government to ensure that its people enjoy a decent standard of living and an improved quality of life, the Government has energetically tackled this responsibility. And, in the absence of truly vibrant private sectors to lead economic growth and development as in developed countries, the tasks performed by the Government have expanded and have become more demanding.

Antigua and Barbuda has, however, never been short on ideas as to how to help itself and as to how it can be assisted internationally in overcoming vulnerability and accelerating sustainable development. Sustainable development is foremost in our thinking. At the sixth meeting of the Commonwealth Consultative Group on Environment at the United Nations in April, we received support from the attending States for the ideas posited.

In the first place, Antigua and Barbuda hopes that the vulnerability index being developed by the Commonwealth secretariat and the World Bank task force will be introduced as soon as possible into international organizations. This must be borne in mind from the perspective that we have repeatedly addressed the limitations and unfairness of using per capita income in assessing our economic efficacy.

Secondly, following the decision of the disputes tribunal of the World Trade Organization supporting the contention of the discrimination directed at the banana regime operating under the Lomé Treaty, there is an urgent need for the World Trade Organization to apply special and differential treatment to small island developing States as it does to least developed countries. If markets in Europe are eroded for small States, those States will deteriorate economically, socially and politically to the point of placing yet another burden on the international community. This deduction is made from an analysis of the dispute tribunal's ruling, which suggests that the entire quota system for imports by the European Union from the African-Caribbean-Pacific countries for all products is now under threat.

In the third place, we would like to reiterate the call made for a disaster fund in 1995 by our Prime Minister, The Right Honourable Lester Bird. He made that call following the devastation of hurricane Luis, which wiped out one year of Antigua and Barbuda's gross domestic product in 36 perilous hours. Whereas the existing mechanisms address the purpose of relieving immediate

suffering and agony, they are woefully insufficient for reconstruction and rehabilitation.

As one who represents his country on the Committee of 24, the so-called Decolonization Committee, I was somewhat taken aback to hear the Foreign Minister of a country that had previously supported non-intervention state that the United Nations has failed to address well-known conflicts of catastrophic proportions in a timely manner. It would therefore seem that more and more countries are moving towards the acceptance of joint action in a given country if there is a clear case of genocide and a total violation of human rights.

What happened in East Timor goes well beyond the point of frustration. Since my country has from quite early on advocated the right of the people of Western Sahara to self-determination, we have been saddened each time that plans for a referendum among the Sahraoui people have been delayed. We believe that each and every postponement interferes with and impedes the will of self-determination. The happenings in East Timor will have a further impact on the will of the staunch and hardy Sahraoui people, and this gives us cause for great concern. It is important that everything be done to avoid a repetition of what has happened in East Timor after people have exercised their right of self-determination.

Like other countries, my country believes that intervention in affairs within another State should be the last resort. But there are many questions to be answered in regard to oppression, degradation and dehumanization. The East Timor example should set us working to avoid another catastrophe of that magnitude. I have long marvelled at the prophetic brilliance of the former Foreign Minister of Uruguay, Eduardo Rodriguez Larreta, who in 1946 argued that non-intervention could not be converted into a right to convoke one principle in order to violate all other principles with impunity. Nothing, however, is being advocated here except that we address ourselves meaningfully towards measures to avoid another East Timor.

So much have we been looking forward to the new millennium that we have defied the laws of mathematics and brought forward the beginning of the twenty-first century by making it come about in the last year of the twentieth century. Even at the United Nations is the year 2000 being proclaimed as the beginning of the new millennium. Be that as it may, it is not sufficient to proclaim a new millennium and to have the grand, planned celebration. The commitment to the eradication of poverty, the achievement of peace and security and cooperation for development should be sincere, meaningful and followed through to the level of profound accomplishment.

Antigua and Barbuda cherishes the United Nations and is not unmindful of the numerous advances that have come about as a result of its impact in conflict resolution, the maintenance of peace, the shelter and sanctuary provided to refugees, the promotion of human rights, the eradication of certain diseases and numerous other tangibles. Thus, Antigua and Barbuda remains ready to continue contributing to the advancement of humanity and will, as it has done in the past, insist on the principle of multilateralism. Together, our countries, large and small, can make contributions in overcoming the plagues with which we are afflicted and move towards peace, cohesion, harmony and the alleviation of poverty in the coming century.

The Acting President: We have heard the last speaker in the general debate for this meeting.

I shall now call on those representatives who wish to speak in exercise of the right of reply.

May I remind members that statements in exercise of the right of reply are limited to 10 minutes for the first intervention and to five minutes for the second intervention and should be made by delegations from their seats.

Mr. Mutaboba (Rwanda): My delegation had not intended to take the floor, but after hearing the baseless allegations and lucubrations of Minister Elodia Ndombasi of the Democratic Republic of the Congo, I felt compelled to speak in order to set the record straight.

The international community is well aware of the tragedy that Rwanda endured and which culminated in the genocide of 1994. The Minister from the Democratic Republic of the Congo speaks of aggression. We will be brief in addressing this issue, because it would take us too long to respond to his long and confusing speech. But the first aggression was against Rwanda and started when the genocidal army was allowed to enter the territory of Zaire — today the Democratic Republic of the Congo — with its weapons.

Secondly, they were allowed to regroup, train and recruit from the refugee camps in broad daylight. Those refugee camps, my delegation wishes to remind the

Assembly, were located along the border of Rwanda and the Democratic Republic of the Congo. In that way they were fed and granted refugee status, in contravention of all provisions of the Organization's Charter.

Thirdly, quite a large number of Rwandans — about 2 million — were held hostage by these criminal forces, who had the support of the late President Mobutu. This went on for quite a long time and culminated in cross-border attacks.

What today's Congolese leadership, under President Kabila, cannot deny is its grateful acceptance of the assistance that it sought and obtained from Rwanda and others in the liberation war against Mobutu and his dictatorship. The authorities of the Democratic Republic of the Congo did acknowledge that assistance, as indicated in document S/1999/205. In paragraph 9 of that document, the Congolese authorities stated that

> "the Alliance des Forces Démocratiques pour la Libération du Congo (ADFL) had accepted military and logistical assistance from several friendly countries, including Rwanda and Uganda."

In paragraph 10, they recognize the *quid pro quo* of this assistance in the following words:

> "Those two countries would benefit from providing that assistance since an incidental consequence of the war of liberation was the elimination of tension along their borders which posed a threat to their security and, in particular, the neutralization of members of the former Rwandan armed forces (FAR), Hutu rebels (Interahamwe) and Lord's Resistance Army soldiers."

That is the same army which is being pursued for 2,000 kilometres.

There are many examples we could give which clearly point to the twin root causes of the 1997 crisis in the Democratic Republic of the Congo. At this stage it would be pointless to go back to fuelling the crisis. As far as the security of the region and of the neighbouring countries is concerned, there are internal problems in the Congo as well as external links. Whether or not the Congolese authorities recognize this, it is a fact, and we should distinguish between fact and fiction and between perception and reality.

When we hear the same authorities, including the Minister who just spoke, say that those who committed genocide in Rwanda were justified and deserve support now as they did in the past, these and other similar quotations are actionable statements for which the Government of President Kabila have to answer before a relevant court.

In another statement, the official media of the Democratic Republic of the Congo in Kinshasa called on the population to treat the enemy as "a virus, a mosquito or garbage which must be crushed with determination and without pity". Those words were said by the same Minister who is fuelling the crisis we are trying to resolve today.

When I hear such inflammatory speeches in the Assembly, it reminds me that the last time I saw such a fiasco was in the biggest market in Ethiopia. There is a similarity between that market and this Assembly. It is a pity.

But when we look back at the work of the Security Council, we can see that the commissions that were set up to deal with the crisis are no longer active. But we have to determine and deal with the root causes, especially because of the cycle of impunity, where the same offenders continue to commit crimes without being punished. That is wrong. That is why, by paragraph 1 of its resolution 1161 (1998) of 9 April 1998, the Security Council requested that the Secretary-General of this Organization reactivate the International Commission of Inquiry, with the following mandate:

> "(a) to collect information and investigate reports relating to the sale, supply and shipment of arms and related *matériel* to former Rwandan government forces and militias in the Great Lakes region of central Africa, in violation of Security Council resolution 918 (1994), 997 (1995) and 1011 (1995);
>
> "(b) to identify parties aiding and abetting the legal sale to or acquisition of arms by former Rwandan government forces and militias, contrary to the resolutions referred to above;
>
> "(c) to make recommendations relating to the illegal flow of arms in the Great Lakes region."

Paragraph 87 of the report of the International Commission of Inquiry, contained in document S/1998/1096, states,

> "Persistent reports received by the Commission from numerous sources across southern Africa overwhelmingly attest to this transformation: that the ex-FAR and Interahamwe, once a defeated and dispersed remnant, have now become a significant component of the international alliance against the Congolese rebels and their presumed sponsors, Rwanda and Uganda. The Commission is convinced that the ex-FAR and Interahamwe have continued to receive arms and ammunition, both through their close links with other armed groups in Angola, Burundi, Uganda and elsewhere, and most recently, from the Government of the Democratic Republic of the Congo. Despite the imposition upon them of a Security Council arms embargo, which has remained in force since the genocide of 1994, the ex-FAR and Interahamwe have now become in effect the allies of the Government of the Democratic Republic of the Congo and its allies, the Governments of Angola, Chad, Namibia and Zimbabwe. The new relationship has conferred a form of legitimacy on the Interahamwe and the ex-FAR. This is a profoundly shocking state of affairs."

In that light, we would like to draw the attention of the Assembly to the sanctions Committee referred to in Security Council resolution 1161 (1998) of 9 April 1998. It is still in place and should be reactivated in order to monitor the situation closely to find out what is going on.

Before concluding, I should like to ask the Assembly to make sure that, once and for all, we move forward in resolving the crisis in the Congo. The solution remains the disarming of those criminals who have been perpetuating the genocide all over the region, and carrying with them the ideology of genocide. If we do not do so, and if we do not divert the attention of the public away from that ideology, we will not resolve the problems but create even more of them.

Mr. Acemah (Uganda): Uganda's position on the internal conflict in the Democratic Republic of the Congo is well known. It has been clearly enunciated here in the General Assembly, in the Security Council, in the Organization of African Unity and elsewhere. Ugandan troops are in the Democratic Republic of the Congo as a result of a bilateral agreement between the two countries. My Minister made clear his position on that issue last week in our policy statement to the General Assembly at this fifty-fourth session. I shall therefore not waste the precious time of the General Assembly with a repetition our well-known position.

I would, however, like to deny categorically the false, malicious and gratuitous allegations made this afternoon by the representative of the Democratic Republic of the Congo against Uganda. I would like to reiterate that Uganda is committed to the implementation of the Lusaka Agreement. We hope that all signatories, including the Democratic Republic of the Congo, are committed to the success of the Lusaka Agreement. I hardly need remind the representative of the Democratic Republic of the Congo that, without the support of the Government and people of Uganda, the Democratic Republic of the Congo would today most probably still be called Zaire and would be under the dictatorship of Mobutu Sese Seko and his cronies. The representative would most likely be hiding somewhere in the jungles of the Congo. The unnecessary diatribe which the representative of the Democratic Republic of the Congo unleashed against Uganda is clearly in violation of the letter, and certainly of the spirit, of the Lusaka Agreement, which his President signed and promised to uphold.

Mr. Mwamba Kapanga (Democratic Republic of the Congo) (*spoke in French*): I do not intend to launch into polemics. I would simply like to reply briefly to the statements made by the representatives of Rwanda and Uganda.

I shall start by saying that, indeed, there was genocide in Rwanda, and 500,000 people met their deaths in the course of that genocide, which took place in 1994. However, I must also add that the genocide was perpetrated by Rwandans, against Rwandans, on Rwandan soil. Not a single Congolese went to Rwanda to kill a single Rwandan. On the contrary, the Congolese people were obliged to receive in their own land more than 1.2 million Rwandans, and it is those Rwandans who have created the poverty and the desolation in the east of our country.

Yes, there was genocide in Rwanda, and we have acknowledged the fact. That genocide caused the deaths of civilians. But the fact that there was genocide in Rwanda, perpetrated by Rwandans against Rwandans, does not mean that today we must tolerate the soldiers sent by Rwanda into Congolese territory to kill the people

of the Congo — massacres that can only be considered acts of genocide against the Congolese people.

The Rwandans say they are on Congolese soil for reasons of security. That was the argument that was made at the beginning of the war, but later we all discovered that Rwandans were really on our soil not in the interests of the security of Rwanda, as the Minister claimed, but rather because of the Congo's resources. The recent battles in Kisangani proved that to us. The Rwandan and Ugandan press have said that the Rwandan and Ugandan soldiers fought on Congolese territory not over matters of security but to control the resources of the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

I should like to say briefly that my country has committed itself to respecting the Lusaka Agreement, and we intend to do so. We are prepared to ensure that the Agreement is implemented. But I must also say that it is not the Democratic Republic of the Congo that is holding up the implementation of the Agreement; it is, rather, those who say that they want peace and security in the region. Today they are in the process of massing their troops, bringing in more weapons and occupying new areas. If they truly wished for a ceasefire and for peace, they would not have continued to do that after signing the Lusaka Agreement.

I should like to repeat very clearly that the Democratic Republic of the Congo has committed itself to respecting the Lusaka Agreement. That is why we requested the Security Council and the Secretary-General of the United Nations to speed up the process of implementing the peace Agreement by sending the peacekeeping force as soon as possible so that peace can prevail, not only in the Congo, but throughout the entire Great Lakes region.

The meeting rose at 7.40 p.m.